



**MANCHESTER
BRANCH
NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2015**



Anthony Hesketh 19th June 1940 to 11th November 2015

Further sad news is hot off the press. As you know Tony had been ill for 15 months though he had come through surgery very successfully following his operations to remove a cancer in his throat. Unfortunately he never maintained any of improvement that was expected in the following months.

Over the last six weeks his condition deteriorated quite rapidly till it became necessary to transfer him back to hospital. He did come home for a couple of days but it was obvious almost immediately that his condition required 24 hour care. Once back in hospital he weakened visibly on a daily basis. Pneumonia set in and scans showed his lungs were badly affected, almost certainly with the spread of cancer from the throat condition.

He passed from this world on 11th November 2015 in the middle of the afternoon.

Tony loved his cacti and succulents though he came to the hobby late in life. He joined the society about 12 years ago and came to his first meeting soon after receiving the Welcome booklet. He nearly didn't come to a second meeting. Unfortunately he chose the AGM as his first meeting and there couldn't be a worse meeting for anyone's inauguration to the hobby. However, Brenda, his wife, persuaded him to give it another go and I'm glad to say he did.

He was an ever present at meetings from that day on till his illness struck. It was not long before he joined the committee where he was an invaluable helper, always ready to do his bit and beyond. He often accompanied me on trips to other branches and zones. He also loved going to nurseries, especially Gordon Foster's Open Day.



He loved his garden and had some cacti and succulents before joining the society but he was inspired by the friends he made. The collection grew quickly to its present dimensions.

His work was varied including working as a butcher, he was a member of the Process Block team at Wilsons Brewery, a hand at British Aerospace, redundancy then hit and finally he was a Facilities Manager at CWS.

This quiet, unassuming man leaves a wife and grown up children to whom we offer our heartfelt condolences. He will be sorely missed by them and by us, his friends, as well.

North West Mesemb Show 2015
by Peter Bint with pictures from Chris Leather

Another mesemb show has been successfully arranged thanks to the enthusiastic support of the many entrants and members of the Manchester Branch of BCSS. As has become the expectations of the participants and the visiting public the plants on display were truly admirable. When you have a show that covers such a wide spectrum of a huge section of the succulent world it is truly a testament to the growers that they can put such a varied selection of plants on the show tables. This show has been using a schedule first designed many years ago by Ray Allcock at the behest of the then Mid Cheshire Branch of BCSS. It took a great deal of thought and research to produce this schedule and it has stood the test of time. Since Manchester Branch assumed the role of organising the event there have been only very minor adaptations to the classes, often executed following comments from entrants and judges.

Such was the case this year when class 12 of the previous year's schedule which asked for plants from 'Acrodon, Carruanthus, Dracophilus Juttadinteria, Namibia, Odontphorus and Psammophora' was split in two. It was Alice Vanden Bon who commented, whilst judging the 2014 show, that some genera, no matter how good, stood little chance against the show potential of others in the class. Thus the class was split into two separate classes, one for 'Acrodon, Carruanthus, Dracophilus and Odontphorus and the other for Juttadinteria, Namibia and Psammophora. Thus the former had the ability to shine in their own right.

Our Judge and speaker for this year was that lover of mesembs, John Watmough. His task started promptly at 11am and it did not take him long to realise that his task was highly testing. 37 competitive classes, many with large numbers of entries to assess and choose from, meant that his task was nearing the end as we approached 1pm. He still had to choose the special awards winners at that point. After considerable study and thought John settled on the following results in his opinion:

- MSG Award for the best plant in the show - Mike Stansbie for a specimen of *Bijlia cana*
- The Oakdene Trophy for the best collection of plants went to Adrian Weatherill for collection of 6 plants from different genera in pots not exceeding 3.5"
- The Abbey Brook Trophy for the best Conophytum was awarded to Mike Stansbie for a splendid exhibit of *Conophytum tantillum v. helenae*
- The Theaker Trophy for a notable exhibit in the judge's opinion was awarded to Mike Stansbie, yet again, for his admirable entry of *Braunsia apiculata* in class 31
- The Jumanery Mesemb Trophy for most points in the show was also won by Mike Stansbie who amassed 47 points from his entries in the show. He was followed, not too closely by Peter Bint with 35 points and Ian Robinson with 28 points



MSG Award Winner



Abbey Brook Trophy Winner



Theaker Trophy Winner

A pleasing outcome was the fact that virtually everybody who participated in the show earned at least one card, many won more, for their efforts which is credit to their ability to cultivate wonderful plants.

By now it was time to close the kitchen which had been very creditably run by the members who gave up their time to feed the people present, with much praise from all. The canteen area was rapidly changed into the talk arena. This was the first time we had been treated to a talk that used live plant material instead of photographic memories since the show moved to Manchester. This actually allowed the show to be moved to the far end of our 70' hall and meant more plant material could be shown on the sales benches. As always John provided a talk, which was interspersed with his humorous quips' imparting information about mesembs that were growing in his greenhouse in October.

All too soon the talk came to a close and with it the show itself. I am hugely indebted to many people who helped to make such a successful show. These include the people who came on Friday evening to prepare the hall for the show and who stayed to dismantle the same after the show finished. The show competitors are to be commended for assembling a truly worthy display of mesembs for judging and viewing. Many Manchester branch members worked quietly and efficiently behind the scenes carrying out necessary tasks and, of course, the 'secretarial team' were very busy ensuring the cards were correctly produced for the winning entries. Finally the visiting society members and their friends are to be praised for coming to see the show. Hopefully they will help to spread the news that is not always received with the enthusiasm the plants deserve - mesembs are really worth growing.

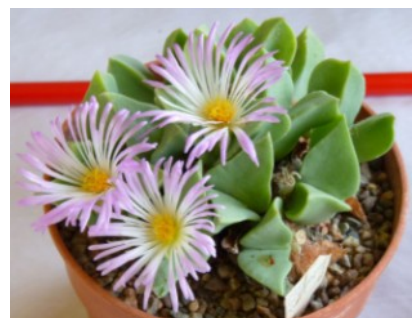
We now look forward to next year's show which will be on Saturday October 8th at the Manchester Branch meeting hall in Middleton, Manchester at 10.30am. I sincerely hope that the numbers of competitors will increase to provide even more plant material to view and that the viewing public will be swelled to even greater numbers.



Four plants that caught the eye.

(left) Oakdene Trophy Winner

Setting up the hall (below).



<http://www.manchester.bcsc.org.uk/index.php/north-west-mesemb-shows>



Ken Ballard 19th June 1931 to 14th July 2015

I am sad to have to report the passing of one of our recent regular members and former committee member, Ken Ballard. Ken was only a member for a short time but I am sure all those who met him will remember him with fondness. Born in Oldham in 1931 Ken had many passions in his life. His interest in cacti stemmed from contact with plants in his childhood and remained with him throughout his adult life. However, Ken was not just into cacti and there were many other interests in his life. He brewed home-made wine which some of us had the opportunity to try as a raffle prize at branch meetings. He was interested in aviation and travelled the world to observe aircraft in many countries. As an avid Mahjong player he was a regular member of a local society. Always proud of his roots he was, naturally, an Oldham football fan and often spoke with passion of the enjoyment of cold winter Saturday afternoons on the terraces at Boundary Park.



But it is as a member of our branch and its committee that most of us will remember him. Although ostensibly a quiet man, if you listened to him carefully he was obviously an educated and motivated person. His greatest regret in life was to pass the Cambridge University entrance exam but was unable to take up his place. With this in mind, my lasting memory of Ken is an example of his lateral and novel thought processes. During the committee meeting when we were discussing judging of the annual Cactus and Succulent mini-shows he suddenly said "Let Beryl judge it". A comment which immediately focused everybody's attention to ways we had not previously considered for judging a show. This ultimately led discussion towards the current system where all attendees at the branch meeting contribute to the judging of the mini-shows.

Due to failing health Ken could not attend meetings during his final couple of years. He died aged 84 with a collection of chronic illnesses equal to his beloved cactus collection.

Christopher's Greenhouse story - an update.

This article follows on from the two previous articles (2011 and 2014). Those described the transformation of my collection from the mid 2000's to the middle of 2014. In the first article I set out how we had installed electricity and levelled the floor. In the second article I described the changes caused by buying more plants and repotting the ones I already had. In this article I'm going to set down how things have changed in the last 12 months or so.

The original 6 x 4 greenhouse was in reality installed the wrong way round. The door should have been at right-angles to how it was. As mentioned before it wasn't level in any direction either. For years I have had in my head an image of what the greenhouse (and garden) could look like given a full redesign. Due to various circumstances it became possible in the early summer of 2014 to really think about having a new greenhouse and a new garden.

The plan was to hire a landscape gardener to completely strip back the garden to soil level and then flag the entire area in Indian Stone with several different levels. The old greenhouse would go and be replaced with a 12 x 6 greenhouse bought using my annual works bonus.

So we had a chat with the landscape gardener sometime in early June and sketched out a few ideas as to how we wanted things to look. Then things went into limbo until the end of September when the project started moving in earnest. It was only then that the enormity of the project started to sink in.....

The biggest head ache was where to store the plants! They couldn't live outside, nor was there room in the house. It wasn't practical to borrow a neighbour's garage either. Fortunately my Auntie and Uncle (who live in America) still have their UK house. It is empty most of the year, and the heating is only on in winter. I arranged with them to use their tiled kitchen floor. It was certainly a weight off my mind to know that the plants were dry, fairly warm, and out of the way.

Eventually the day came when we could start moving the plants. Numerous borrowed trays (from Peter and Brian) made the job fairly quick and with Daniel and my parents helping we soon had two cars loaded up ready to move the plants. A second load in a single car was needed the day after. I've often wondered what the neighbours of my Auntie and Uncle thought when we turned up with all the trays of plants.

The following weekend we started to dismantle the old greenhouse - we were now past the point of no return. Surprisingly most of the glass and the nuts and bolts came out fairly easily. A couple of panes of glass got broken, but we didn't have any major catastrophes. Daniel was in his element undoing many of the nuts and bolts.

With the greenhouse gone it was possible to see for the first time the area where the new greenhouse was going to go, so we mapped out roughly where the steps would be. There would be a lower portion near the house, then a small mid terrace with an area for seating and the clothes line and then an upper section that would house the greenhouse and a bit of space at the side. In the end we needed another raised section to put the bins on.

The new greenhouse then arrived and we had the challenge of getting a lot of glass and 12' sections of aluminium stored safely away. Tricky but we managed it - even if we didn't have a backroom for a month.....

At long last the day arrived when Chris, the gardener, arrived to start work. They left most of the equipment overnight for an early start the next day. When I went to work that morning we had a garden. When I came back eight hours later we didn't. It had gone.

Over the next week or so flags started appearing as Chris and his helpers set the flags down. Many of the stone flags had to be cut to size and for several days it also rained very heavily. Slowly but surely the garden started taking shape, until eventually they reached the back wall. As the greenhouse was going to sit on the flags we decided to raise it up an inch or so with a plinth. The whole 12 x 6 area, plus a few inches extra is about 2" higher than the main terrace.

With that in place I could finally see what sort of size of greenhouse it was going to be, and it seemed enormous. The final garden job for Chris was to build a wall. He used reclaimed stone from a nearby barn and it looks excellent. One thing I was keen on was making sure the greenhouse had plenty of ventilation. As two sides of the greenhouse are against walls I came up with the idea of having a hole in the new wall, just where the vent would be. It works a treat as well, and even the local cats like it as it is somewhere dry to sit if it is raining!



The garden before and afterwards



Chris also kindly built the greenhouse for us. That was certainly a big job and we are very grateful that he helped with that. After what seemed many weeks of worry I could finally stand in my new greenhouse. New staging could be ordered and assembled and I got two 10 foot double tier and one six foot double tier and several shelves for the wall away from the sun. Also ordered were enough black trays to cover all the staging. I also just had time to get up some makeshift bubble wrap insulation before the worst of the weather started.

Once all that was installed we could then think about bringing the plants back. Again Daniel and my parents helped. Thankfully the plants were alright after their indoor living. I also could not find any slugs or snails in the kitchen (don't tell my Auntie and Uncle.....). I let Daniel be the first person to place a plant in the new greenhouse.

Over the next few weeks (December and January) I spent many hours sorting plants into some sort of order. That was a first – actually being inside my greenhouse, as opposed to poking my head in the door – and it being the middle of winter too! New plants arrived and a few plants that really needed it got potted into bigger pots.

It's been a really big job. Both my Mum and Dad, and Daniel and my sister helped a great deal, for which I am very thankful and appreciative, and of course Chris, the landscape gardener, did all of the hard (and heavy) work, for which we are very grateful.

Since then I've been busy buying plants from various places including Europe for the first time. Although I like my Gymnocalyciums and globular cacti I have decided to buy other types of cacti. For instance I've got quite a few Opuntia type species now and some Cereoid genera too. I wanted to be able to show Daniel the different forms and styles of cacti "design". There are also a few Lithops which I have room to segregate from the cacti. These live on one of the shelves.

Daniel on the other hand seems to like Echeverias and other rosette succulents (I'll have to keep my eye on that). Astrophytums also seem to appeal (don't tell him about eBay, *please!*).

The shelves on the side have been housing my many seedlings. They seem to like it there. Most of the spares have now gone (thank you if you've bought them).

The two bottom tiers have been storing pots and trays at the back, along with the heater, with the two sides tiers holding new purchases and the sales trays. Originally I was going to use one side as a seed growing area, but that story needs to be told another time.

The final project that has been tried this year is to grow cacti outside. A few spare Opuntias and Sempervivums have gone in a raised tray outside.



Daniel waiting for lessons?



The non-Gymno side of the greenhouse.

**NORTH WEST
CACTUS MART
SATURDAY**

MAY 7TH

**OPEN FROM
10.30AM TO
2.30PM**

loads of plants

plenty of food

All the usual attractions

Programme for 2016

Date	Speaker	Talk
January 9th	Alasdair Glen	The whole blooming year
February 13th	Andy Young	South Africa & Namibia 2015
March 12th	Paul Shirley	Caudiciforms A - Z
April 9th		
May 7th		North West Cactus Mart
May 14th	Ian Woolnough	Highlights of a Mexican Journey
June 18th		
June	Branch Outing	Chester Zoo visit or collection of Mike Stansbie or both at different times
July 9th	Rob Stevenson	Kingdom of Madness
August 13th	Brendan Burke	Snow, Rain & Penguins
August 27th	Woody Minich	Two talks to be confirmed
September 10th	Len Newton	"A succulentist at large in Africa"
October 8th	NW Mesemb Show	Judge and speaker not yet arranged
November 12th	Ivor Crook	Mustard, Lithops and two in a bath
December 10th	AGM	with supporting programme
2017		
January 14th	Dorothy Minors	Sunshine and Succulents in South Africa
February 11th	Ian Robinson	L is for