BRITISH CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting, held on Saturday 7th December 2019 at 11.00 a.m.
at the Holiday Inn, Milton Keynes, Bucks.

Trustees Present:		
	Mr Ian Thwaites (ITH)	Chairman
	Dr Jim Gibbs (JG)	Vice Chairman
	Mr David Kirkbright (DK)	Treasurer (left after the lunch break)
	Mr Eddy Harris (EH)	Secretary
	Mr Graham Charles (GC)	Bradleya Editor
	Mr Al Laius (AL)	Journal Editor
	Mrs Alice Vanden Bon (AVB)	Technical Editor
	Mr Barry Tibbetts (BT)	Shows Committee Representative
	Dr Tony Mace (TMa)	Publications Officer
	Dr Simon Snowden (SS)	Future Membership Secretary
	Mr John Arnold (JA)	Legal Advisor
	Mrs Suzanne Mace (SM)	Committee
	Mr Graham Evans (GE)	Committee
	Mr Stirling Baker (SB)	Committee

AGREED

Mr Thwaites welcomed Dr Snowden to his first meeting. He said that Dr Snowden would be working initially with Mr Morris and taking over at a later date.

19/51 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Mr Bill Hildyard (BH) (Forum &Website Administrator), Mr Tony Morris (TM) (Current Membership Secretary).

19/52 **MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 10TH AUGUST 2019**

There was one very minor alteration of the agreed minutes distributed of the August meeting in that the name of the new Secretary of the Conservation Committee was mis-spelt, (should be Stevenson), so the corrected minutes were formally signed and dated by Mr Thwaites.

19/53 **OUTSTANDING UPDATES FROM MAY MEETING MINUTES**

19/10 German Booklets - Mr Charles had now heard that the idea was not supported by the D.K.G. board, so was not possible.

19/54 **CHAIRMAN'S ACTION UPDATES FROM MEETING HELD ON 10TH AUGUST 2019**

Mr Harris said that only Mr Thwaites had submitted updates as below:-

19/35 'Branding' – The 'Branding Information' had now been distributed to the branches and Mr Thwaites emphasised that it was important that this was used by everybody. It was also said that the Society letter blanks should not be used by branches as they had the Society Charity number on them which branches were not entitled to show. Mr Charles added that it was important that our 'branding information' should be used henceforth to present a permanent Society image in the public eye.

19/36(b) Possible Awards – This had not been completed due to Mr Morris' high workload.

19/37(b) Funding for a Display – This information had been passed to Mr Cowdell and Dr Snowden.

19/37(c) Modification of Website for Visually Impaired Readers – Mr Hildyard was arranging this.

19/41 Update on Treasurer Handover – with change of circumstance not relevant (see below).

19/46 A.G.M. Speakers – He had spoken to Mr Foster to arrange transport for the Mr Lodé and his accommodation.

19/49(a) Internet – In view of Dr Mace's report this needed further discussion.

19/49(c) Reports of Ancillary Officers – He said that this had not happened, so how would we know what problems they had. It was said that the reporting routes were unclear and he said that this had been identified in a document that Dr Taylor had compiled and that **Mr Harris should include this document with when he sent out the agenda for the next meeting (EH)**.

19/55 **TREASURER REPLACEMENT FINALISATION**

As Mr Gillman had informed us that he was not prepared to be the next Treasurer, Mr Kirkbright agreed to continue in the role until a successor was found (see also minute 19/70/4(e)). **Mr Harris would pass the Treasurer's job description around the BoT members after Mr Kirkbright had updated this (EH/DK)**. **Mr Thwaites said that his prime objective was to try to find a replacement for Mr Kirkbright as soon as possible (ITH),** but felt that this should be all of this committee's aim. Mr Baker said that he had found a possible book-keeper person and it was said that anybody dealing with our accounts must be a Society Member and the position involved Trusteeship. **Mr Thwaites would contact that person but it was also queried if that person should be paid for their services (ITH)**. **If that was not successful then he would enquire of people who he knew did this sort of thing and get a cost to do this for us (ITH)**. It was said that it was thought that Charity Law forbad the payment of Trustees, apart from payment of reasonable expenses. It was felt that the Society did not need to become a corporate charity to enter in negotiations with other companies as the Society already did so. **However, our Constitution might need to be changed (JA/DK)**.

19/56 **UPDATES FROM THE REPORTS OF OFFICERS (SEE ALSO 19/70)**

a) Show Committee Report – It was agreed that Mr Kirkbright would deal with the National Show finances. It was also said that arranging the photography should be a Shows Committee responsibility and that with the importance of Social Media, more care should be taken with the type of photographs, ie. shots should include the staging of plants, the presentation of Awards, shots of prize winning plants and their owners and general shots of all aspects of the show. **Mr Thwaites said that he was willing to suggest possible photographers and help in any way (ITH)**. It was agreed that there would be no raffle or tombola due to lack of volunteers to run these. Our two Patrons had been invited to the show, as had some of our 'Society Ambassadors', and it was agreed that the former would open the show, present the awards and that all would mingle with the general public. The photographs of the former would appear in the Show Schedule. It was agreed that all existing Show Stationery cards, prizes and medals would be used in the show although they didn't comply with our 'branding' image, the latter only being an marketing strategy and not relevant to the show. Mr Thwaites said that most shows that he visited did not have a Society Publicity stand and he questioned whether free show stationery should be issued to those that did not have such a stand. It was said that to encourage such a practice, another stand of Mr Thwaites' design should be arranged, perhaps as a table top design and the two be used at the National Show, with a publicity stand in the foyer area and a cultivation stand, possibly incorporated in the stand run by Dr and Mrs Mace, with people there to advise on the Society and how to grow our plants. It was also said that we needed more pull up banners and that perhaps one per Zone be distributed during the National Show. It was also said that not as many stewards were wanted as provided at the last show and that we should have a family entrance fee and perhaps should incorporate a children's activity stand at the show. There was also discussion on the sale of what CITES considered to be 'illegal plants' after what had happened at E.L.K. Mr Thwaites had spoken to a person from D.E.F.R.A. who said that a so called illegal plant that had been recently described might have been in cultivation for many years, but that if they found a known, recently described plant on sale, they would 'throw the book' at the person selling it. It would also cover show plants that were 'illegal' ie. 'illegal' plants were now considered to be those exported from Mexico since November 1992. He suggested that a responsible Society Representative should talk to D.E.F.R.A., on the law as it stood, possibly Ray Stephenson, this discussion to include not only nurseries, but private plant sellers and also our seed distribution. **Mr Tibbetts would ask him to do so (BT)**. It was also said that this item might also cover the import of plant diseases as well. It was asked if that information would appear in the March journal to inform members, but Mr Thwaites felt that we currently did not know sufficient about the problem. **Mr Thwaites asked Mr Tibbetts to include somewhere in the show something along the lines of us seeking clarification of the problem from D.E.F.R.A. (BT)**.

b) Chairman's Report – Mr Thwaites said that he would like to thank everybody who helped make this Autumn such a success with the successful events that had occurred.

i) Chinese Society – He also said that he had been approached by the Chinese Cactus Society which wished to have greater ties with European Societies. It would like to reproduce some of the articles that appeared in our journals, to translate some of our books into Chinese and have speakers talk at their conventions. There were some reservations expressed, but it was agreed that we would 'test the water' to see if it was viable.

ii) Slides – Mr Thwaites also said that he understood that we did not have a viable quality plant slide library and that members should be asked to donate good quality images for use on say Social Media.

c) Zone Reps. Meeting – Dr Gibbs said that it concerned the Zone Rep's understanding of the Society 'Branding' document and the Society offer of providing 500 information leaflets for each branch. It was felt that a better consistency would be achieved by them using a central preferred Printer company with a Society Account. Mr Thwaites had no objection to this as the Shows Committee already did this and he wondered if the Journal team would want to get involved in this. This would not apply to Branch/Zone Programmes. It was also said that the Society Charity number appeared in some of the 'Branding' templates and if used by branches, this should be deleted from them, if they were used.

d) Journal Updates – It was said that certain of the names appearing on the seed list needed to be updated and it was agreed that the Society would provide a new computer system for Mr Laius to replace his very old one.

e) Seed Distribution – There had been problems with the seed distribution this year which had led to extra work in preparing the list due to the loss of some of the seeds. It was said that some of the seeds thought to be lost had now been found and that we should continue with the current new seed buyer, as it was felt that he would learn from his mistake, but that if it happened again then a new seed buyer should be found.

f) Conservation Committee – Mr Thwaites said that a couple of meetings ago we had said that the Society be placed on the Charter Institute website and it was yet to appear there. **Mr Arnold said that he had contacted them at the time and would contact them again (JA)**.

g) Graham Charles' Booklet – Mr Charles suggested that rather than give 200 copies to each branch, **he suggested that a letter be sent to each branch containing a copy of the booklet and the letter explaining that these were available free to all branches, what actual number of the booklets each branch required and that these could be picked up at the Society A.G.M or some other event (JG)**. Mr Charles showed the information that Chris Pugh would display with the booklets in Garden Centres and said that some of the Garden Centres would also have this personalised. He'd already had 20.000 copies printed of which 18,000 Chris Pugh had bought from the Society and 1,000 copies had been given to the CactusWorld Live Event. It was said that branches should sell them at £2,50 each to the general public, but it was also said that they could not be sold to local Garden Centres if they were part of a chain as already agreed with Chris Pugh. It might be possible that they could be sold to a local independent Garden Centre, but at the wholesale price that Chris Pugh was charging, which was £1.10p.

h) Publication Report – It was said that the replacement label problem would be solved by early Spring and that more copies of the ***Stapeliad*** book should be printed.

i) Server Report – Mr Thwaites said that he had found an experienced helper for Mr Hildyard and that he needed to find out if this person would be interested in helping Dr Mace with the server problems. **If this did not materialise then Mr Thwaites said that he would find another person of suitable experience (ITH)**. **He also asked that that Dr Mace, the Journal team, Bradleya editor and Slide Library (David Lambie) let him know what requirements they expected from the Server (TMa/AL/GC/DL).**

19/57 **MEMBERSHIP CARDS**

There was a long discussion on this subject, mainly on when the next ones should be distributed. Mr Thwaites was of the opinion that they should be distributed in March whilst Mr Kirkbright was of the opinion that this should be done in June, based on current membership renewals. Mr Thwaites felt that in most other Societies new members got their journal when they joined and that if somebody rejoined late; say in April, they would not receive their March journal. This would save the expense of printing off spare journals for these latecomers. It was agreed that the new Membership Cards would not be personalised and it was said that including it with the March Journal could cause further problems as this already contained multiple inserts. As this problem would not happen in the near, forseeable, future (until the new Website was up and running), **Mr Thwaites had asked Dr Snowden to establish how many late renewals he received next year (SS)**. After the lunch break, there was a majority vote that the Membership Card would go out in the March 2020 journal, it would indicate that it's validity would be until March 2021 and that it would be printed on a different colour card.

19/58 **COMMUNICATIONS/AWARDS**

a). Only 1 Branch Award of Merit had been received and this was agreed. This would be announced at the A.G.M. and then presented to the branch later by the Zone Rep.

b). Mr. Harris had received an application for a R.H.M.A. This was agreed by a majority vote. It was also agreed that a D.O.M. should be awarded.

19/59 **GORDON ROWLEY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

Mr Thwaites said that this had been agreed and that we needed to write up the criteria for this and announce it at the A.G.M. He felt that this should be anybody who had spent a lifetime with our plants and should include anybody around the world, not necessarily one of our members. The nomination could come from any person in the world although it felt by members of this committee that it should come from one of our members, seeing that it was a Society Award. **Mr Thwaites asked that Messrs Charles and Laius should compile the Award criteria and said that he felt the award should be a special one such as a Society paperweight which he asked Mrs Mace to investigate (GC/AL/SM)**. It might result in new speakers at our A.G.M.

19/60 **BADGE DESIGN**

Mr Charles showed and distributed examples of the badge which he'd had made. These were acceptable to this committee and would be passed to our Membership Secretary to distribute to new members. It was suggested that they be sold at £2 each and it was agreed that we order 1000 more, 500 with the pin fitting only and 500 with a safety pin catch.

19/61 **FINALISING THE 2020 A.G.M. PROGRAMME**

Mr Harris said that he needed all who were standing for elected positions to send him their C.V. and their nomination by 10th January 2020. It was said that Jo Adderley was interested in being elected as an annual Trustee. Mr Thwaites said that she had wanted him to visit Chester zoo and he had felt that she wanted to ask him about a Conservation grant. Mr Arnold said that she had already submitted paperwork on this, but that she needed to send in a proper breakdown including costings before this could be approved.

19/62 **CONVENTION PLANS**

Mr Baker said that he had asked two other people to help him arrange this. He said that he felt that speakers should speak English reasonably well so that they could speak to attendees in a friendly manner. He was considering Leicester as our venue, but not at the Hilton hotel, but at the Marriott hotel. He intended to visit this venue in January with Messrs Darbon and Evans to establish a reasonable cost for the event. These costs would then be passed to this committee. Mr Thwaites said that he intended to market the Convention for £25/day which we should try to achieve. This could be done by having a sandwich and a drink at lunchtime, the convention closing at teatime so that attendees would meet in the hotel bar to chat with speakers and other attendees, but maybe them staying in a B&B guesthouse each night rather than the hotel. It was said that we must be careful not to affect Conventions run by Zones.

19/63 **SUCCESSION AND FORWARD PLANNING**

Mr Thwaites asked that all committee members think about this for the future.

19/64 **ARCHIVAL RECORDS FUTURE**

Mr Thwaites said that once the new website was up and running we needed to have a storage space for Society Archival material as it was felt that this aspect was missing. It was down to all Officers to maintain such records.

19/65 **STRATEGY TO BUILD SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP AND BRANCH ATTENDANCE**

This had been discussed at great length recently and there were many aspects in place to achieve this, such as the branch leaflets, trying to get the branches to promote themselves, etc. Mr Thwaites said he was keen to provide help to any branch that wanted to do this, such as talking to their Zone Reps, etc. Some branches were doing a great job in

achieving this. **He said that he was asking Dr Snowden and this committee to identify those people who do a lot of work for the Society in any way (SS/All BoT members)**.

19/66 **SOCIAL MEDIA**

This was becoming increasingly important in the modern world, but the information that appeared there was not necessarily true or relevant. Mr Thwaites felt that we should monitor this and control this information carefully.

19/67 **WEB SITE**

Mr Thwaites said that he was not aware of what the detailed problems of this and Dr Snowden had produced a detailed documentation of what was required on the Membership Database and also produced details of the technical and functional omissions. He said that we were building the Web Site without any standards, such as the requirements for the journal team and the Shop. He was due to meet up with the Web Site company soon, for they wanted to complete their work, but he was unaware of what was required. Any changes would cost £100/hour and he needed to know what was required. He had had no replies to his queries about this, so how could he meet up with the Web Site company and ask for improvements? He urgently needed help to do this. He said that once Mr Hildyard was well enough he would have a meeting with the company together with Mr Hildyard and Dr Snowden. It was then suggested that we had a meeting with relevant members of this group to thrash out what was actually required and what was wanted for our Web Site prior to that meeting and it was agreed that Messrs Thwaites, Hildyard, Laius, Charles and Evans, Dr Snowden and Dr Mace should attend this at a date to be advised. Mr Thwaites said that there should be a Web Editor and a criteria for this should be compiled.

19/68 **CURRENT PROGRESS ON GORDON ROWLEY'S LIBRARY**

As one of Mr Rowley's estate's Trustees Mr Charles said that with help from Mrs Vanden Bon the Rowley house had now been cleared, including his meccano and other things. Mr Charles was storing Gordon's cushions. Probate had been applied for, as had setting up a Trust, so everything was progressing. He said that the Trust would be an incorporated one. Mr Charles was looking around for a suitable building to house the library and he suggested that the Society could contribute to this, if agreed. The building would be in the Midlands, close to a motorway and would have a secure store and a meeting room. Sources of future income would be from the sale of donated books. He felt that buying a property was a more suitable option that renting it and that there should be sufficient monies available. He felt that hopefully it should be finalised in some 6 months time.

19/69 **ZONE RESTRUCTURING**

This had been discussed at the Zone Reps meeting (see 19/70/2). There were two options discussed which were minor tinkering with the current Zone Structure and the larger geographical area of some Zones. Two other options were also discussed; to keep the current Zones and to combine some of the smaller Zones, so that they were financially viable to fund projects. It was said that the meeting had been poorly attended and it was emphasised that if a Zone Rep could not attend, a deputy should be arranged. There was some comment on the suggested new Branch combinations, due to travel distance and problems and it was said that most of the Reps did not fully carry out their agreed function.

19/70 **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

1. **Chairman:**

Mr Thwaites said that the Autumn had been a very successful time for the B.C.S.S. The Society had had a busy summer which was continued with CactusWorld Live being such a success. Obviously the formula of attracting the experienced members, together with those who had only recently been attracted to our plants, had worked very well. He had subsequently had some great feedback from visitors (young, old, new and long-standing) all with the same message of congratulations, etc. He expressed a big thank-you to everybody involved in bringing this together.

He believed that there was now a mood within the Society to grow and when one looked at some of the more successful branches it could be seen how that this was being done. He had tried to illustrate this in an article in the December Journal.

He said that the only thing stopping us from having a full blown membership drive now was the Web site and this still required some more work and this would need to be discussed in detail at the forthcoming December BoT meeting.

He had been contacted by a Chinese Cactus and Succulent Society, that had wanted to grow and develop a relationship with the B.C.S.S. to the extent that they wanted to invite five B.C.S.S. speakers to China in 2021 to talk at their Convention. This seemed like an ideal opportunity to grow the Society and forge links across the world.

He said that the rebranding team had done a great job and he expected the Society to follow the instructions given with immediate effect.

He also said that he had been disappointed this year in that every branch show that he had visited, not one had a Society display/information stand and that there was no one available to help members of the general public. When one considered that shows were our shop window, it was very disappointing when we did not take advantage of the opportunity. He questioned why do we offer free show stationery, when in return we were not being helped by branches to grow the Society?

He said that Social Media continued to grow and that we needed to consider ways of capitalising on this.

He also said that his top priority was to find a Treasurer to replace Mr Kirkbright, who had already retired once and had returned to help us after the Society could not find a replacement.

2. **Vice-Chairman**:

a)i) The Zone Reps meeting – This was held as usual at the Birmingham Autumn Show in October and a number of topics

were addressed.

ii) Meeting Attendance – There was a lot of disappointment expressed about the lack of attendance at the meeting. It was emphasised that if a Zone Rep was unable to attend then they should arrange for a deputy to attend in their place. This was the only occasion when Zones got a chance to meet and talk about not only Zone matters but also Society matters and without a good attendance, the ability of the Zones to influence Society decisions was diminished. It was important to ensure our discussions created decisions that are ratified and acted upon. Action points circulated with the minutes would be followed up and an interim report from all the reps produced for the time of the Society A.G.M., which was more or less halfway between the Zone Reps meeting. As an agenda and minutes were circulated and available to all Reps, the meeting could make decisions on these items.

iii) Branch and Zone Accounts – The letter to Branch secretaries was presented, informing them of the result of the review that the trustees had conducted over the last year looking in particular at the way Branch and Zone accounts were handled with respect to Charity Commission rules, informing them that their financial independence remained, but they could no longer use the charity number as if it was their own as it referred to the main Society only.

iv) R.H.S. Shows – Zone Reps were asked to let all their branches know that those who attended R.H.S. Shows and sell plants were not permitted by R.H.S. rules to buy in plants for re-selling. Any plant sales must come from their own propagations. If this rule was flouted then the branch would be excluded from these shows.

v) Society Branding – Putting aside the like or dislike of the logo itself, the meeting accepted a document that described the result of the branding committee and included some examples for use, with the proviso that it really needed a proposed single page summary at the beginning, as there was a real possibility that some branches would ignore the fairly detailed information in the following pages. The offer of providing 500 information leaflets based on new branding for each branch customised with their details was welcomed. That all Society materials needed to be moved to the new designs was accepted, although it was agreed that it might be too late to incorporate all necessary changes in next year's programmes for many branches, but at the very least the new logo should be used. Degrees of central funding was discussed and the meeting strongly supported this, perhaps using a preferred Printer Company with a Society account, aiding consistency and addressing the problem of branches with very different IT skills, achieving the consistency needed and reducing the possibility of the skilled individuals walking away.

vi) Branch/Zone Resource Pack – Related to the previous item, Zones/Branches could detail firstly what they required/used for their public facing events e.g. leaflets, literature, posters, but also, more importantly, what information they would like to see supplied by the Society to help them run their branches and Zones successfully. In part this could be seen as a replacement for the Secretary's Pack whose content needed to be updated for modern requirements. All at the meeting (and those unable to attend) were tasked with contacting their branches, and particularly branch secretaries to find out what they would like to see in a Branch Resources section of the web site.

vii) Zone Structure and Identity – Despite some lengthy discussion, and the presentation of two different ideas presented, the only real decision reached by all was that some sort of restructuring was required and a geographical naming rather than numbers would be very beneficial. The two ideas presented were a relatively minor reorganisation based on the current structure and the larger regional structure shown last year and also at the Society A.G.M. in April. A quick poll showed a fairly even result of those present. An innovative suggestion was to combine both, with the regional structure available for the larger events such as displays at R.H.S. gardens, conventions or shows, more feasible and affordable with more branches/members available, particularly in smaller zones. A further updated visual representation was needed for further discussion.

viii) Next Meeting – Those present wanted to continue meeting and the next would be on 4th October 2020, again at the Birmingham Autumn Show.

b) Response to the Branding Email – There were a couple of responses for the leaflets that were offered with details that they wished used and one asking if there would be an A5 folded template available. He also had a comment about the templates provided mentioning the use of the Charity Number that seemed to contradict the advice given in another email.

c) London Branch – He'd had another enquiry about a London Branch from someone whom he had put in contact with those already looking at organising one.

3. **Membership Secretary's Report**:

Mr Morris said that he had enrolled 200 new members of whom 130 were full, 50 senior, 4 associate and 16 junior. There were 11 new overseas members; 4 from Spain, 3from the U.S.A. 2 from France and one each from Belgium and Italy. 26 of these new Members took Bradleya. The enrolment total for the same period last year was 196. He had reinstated 5 former members.

Approximately 600 new or reinstated members had joined the B.C.S.S. in the rolling year to 02/12/2019. CactusWorld Live produced 28 new members that could be directly attributed to that event.

4. **Treasurer's Report**:

a) Membership – Mr Kirkbright reported that the current numbers as at November 30th were as follows: Full 1794 (+34), Senior 1220 (+52), Junior 64 (+9), which when added together gave a journal taking membership of 3076 (+95). Associate Membership was 222 (+11) and Bradleya takers were 581 (+2).
He said that loss of 'start of year' members across all catagories had remained within a band from 8.9% to 12.5% for the 14 years from 2005 to 2018 and had average 10.1% over that time, this year it jumped to 17.6% with 570 not renewing primarily from those that joined last year. This was the highest loss rate since 1993 when we substantially increased the subscription rate. New members this year had more than matched the loss, but we must hope that the non-renewal level was not repeated next year.

b) Annual Accounts – Copies of these had been prepared in line with previous years and been audited by our new auditors (Messrs Collett Hulance). Mr Kirkbright said that our normal activities had lost some £23,000, which had been covered by our savings, Gift Aid, interest and a revaluation of our investments and the Society had made some £14,000 in excess of this figure. The accounts were then signed by the appropriate Trustees and would appear in the April A.G.M. agenda.

c) National Show – He said that Mr Darbon was successfully booking traders who were paying deposits based on a promise of a return if legislation effectively prevented them selling. 65 tables had been booked so far, compared with 123 in 2016. Mr Brown was successfully gaining sponsorships for the classes with 85 out of 123 classes so far sponsored.

d) Accomodation Payments – The schedule of these had been produced and agreed by this committee.

e) Treasurer's Position – As the Society had been let down by his proposed successor, he was agreeable to continue until a successor was found. He had bulk emailed all existing branch treasurers, as he felt that that pool was the most likely to provide a result. However, of those that had replied, all felt unable for one reason or another to be of assistance. He had also discussed the problem with our accountants/auditors. They were of the opinion that whilst the basic book-keeping could be done by an outside person/company, they recognised that the day to day interaction with suppliers, members and bank accounts must be carried out by an officer of the Society.

5. **Shows Committee Report:**

a) Showing & Judging Weekend – Mr Tibbetts reported that this was the best attended for several years. Unfortunately Moulton College did not perform as well as in the past, with several justified complaints from attendees. These had been taken up with the college, and hopefully would not be repeated in 2021.
In the judging tests, Dr Colin Walker passed both Cacti and Succulent sections at his first attempt, and Vicky Davis and Christine Bruno both passed the Succulent section, which meant that Vicky was now qualified in both sections.
The costs, etc. of the weekend would appear in the Financial Report from David Kirkbright. The dates for the 2021 weekend would be 20th to 22nd August.

b) The National Show 2020 – organisation was now gathering pace. New show stationery had been designed incorporating the new logo and a more modern looking style, with some items having already been printed. George Thompson was to be thanked for a lot of hard work in doing this. The full programme and schedule would be ready for printing after Christmas by Phil Blackwell.
Plant sales tables were selling well within the U.K., but some of the European nurseries were waiting for a Brexit decision! Class sponsorships were also being sent in at a rapid rate. David Kirkbright would present up to date figures for both at the meeting.
A meeting would be held at the venue early in the new year to start agreeing in more detail the events of the weekend with the venue management. This would include the provision of a ticket office, general security, and access arrangements for exhibitors, nurseries, members and the general public over both days.
The R.H.S. Tender Ornamental Plant Committee had agreed to attend the show in a formal capacity, and would be making their own awards.

6. **Research Committee Report:**

Dr Walker reported that the committee currently consisted of the following members:-
Dr Colin Walker (new Chair/Secretary), Lee Hunt (University of Sheffield; new member), Steve Penfield (John Innes Centre, Norwich), Liz Rylott (University of York), Dr Terry Smale.
All had agreed to participate for the coming year.
The committee had been notified of the demise of Alan Hill. Dr Walker was currently attempting to retrieve Alan's Research Committee archive.
The first new grant proposal accepted under his chairmanship had been awarded to:-
Hernán Alvarado-Sizzo, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, for a research project entitled 'Discovering the distribution and systematic position of ***Stenocereus littoralis***: an unknown, highly threatened species from Los Cabos, Northwestern Mexico'. Amount of award: £1,982.03.
Proactive work had begun in an initial attempt to attract further proposals from known active researchers in the field of succulent plant study.
Information on successful research applications and their outcomes on the BCSS website was currently lacking for the recent six years. Some work was underway to rectify this situation.

7. **Conservation Committee Report:**

Mr Stevenson, the new Secretary reported that the committee had had a well-attended meeting on September 29th.
Tributes were paid to Alan Hill, who had passed away since their last meeting. Alan had served on this committee since its inception, much of that time as secretary and he would be greatly missed.
He said that the committee were still awaiting further information regarding one possible project. A second project from Edinburgh Botanical Garden was also discussed, and whilst it was felt the project was more an educational than

conservation project, the committee was unanimously minded to give support to it with some proviso's, and would be discussing these with E.B.G. and inviting a formal application.
He said that no reports had yet been received from the recipients of 2018 Travel Grants.
He also said that the committee had viewed the Conservation pages of the new look B.C.S.S. website at the meeting. Their overall impression was less than favourable, and it was agreed to each member would look at the pages further and provide a list of their thoughts to be collated and put forward. The committee had also discussed the production of an application form for project funding, which could be made available on the website and could facilitate online applications.
The committee had discussed possible new members to replace Alan Hill, and whether it might increase its membership and invite an extra person, also taking the chance to reduce the average age of its membership!
Dates were set for the committee's 2020 meetings.

8. **Journal Editor's Report:**
Mr Laius reported that the December journal had been printed (arriving on schedule, Royal Mail permitting) and would contain 12 articles. Of these, 4 were on cacti (including one which concerned conservation awareness in Mexico), 2 were on succulents and one was on cultivation. In addition there were 2 articles covering showing and growing our plants outdoors. Then there was the seed article, a look at the life and times of Gordon Rowley and of course 'In my Greenhouse'. A longer than usual 'Cactus Talk' should cater for the more scientifically inclined members, as it included 3 reviews of scientific papers. A bumper (longest ever) Newsletter section focused largely on the Branches and offered valuable information which would hopefully (if adopted) stem the decline that some Branches were experiencing. Inserts included the Cultivation sheets and the Seed List.
Looking ahead, he had 6 articles which were already designed, plus another 3 which were with the production team awaiting design and layout, and 9 were currently work in progress. There were another 11 authors who had promised him articles, and he would hope that over the winter months, folks would put pen to paper! There were therefore enough articles for the next two issues (Mar 2020 and Jun 2020).

9. **Advertising Officer's Report:**
Mr Bulmer reported that net advertising revenue for 2019 was £1,628 compared to £1,902, £1,410 and £1,906 in the three preceding years.

10. **Technical Editor:**
Mrs Vanden Bon reported that files for the December Journal were with the Printer on the agreed date. A late change to the Seed List required a new proof to be prepared due to the loss of 49 packets of seed by the new Seed Purchaser, but fortunately this would not lead to any delay in the printing schedule.
David Quail was making enquiries with another printer and a mailing house to discover whether we could personalise the annual membership card, with both name and membership number.

11. **Bradleya Editor:**
Mr Charles reported that work on *Bradleya* 38, his 8th publication, was now in full swing with the aim of publication in the first half of 2020. He currently had 16 papers submitted with a good mix of cacti and other succulents.

12. **Publications:**
Publications sales had been quite active recently. There had been a problem with the 2020 calendars which he thought that most of this committee would know about, ie. there had been a day numbering problem on the June page. This had been fixed by applying an adhesive label. Calendar sales had been quite slow, but would hopefully pick up with the leaflets included in the December journal.
The stock of the ***Stapeliad*** book was getting quite low (around 50). It was still selling well and it was thought that a further reprint should be considered. There was still a small stock (22 copies) of the first edition. He asked for suggestions, please, as to what should be done with these, as they were still a useful book.
A request from Peter Cowdell had been received for publications that he could provide for students of Askham Bryan Agricultural college. There were a number of publications which were un-saleable due to faults (mostly damage to bindings) and Mrs Mace took it upon herself to send him these.
He said that their shed dehumidifier had broken down and needed replacing (it was approximately 10+ years old). He would like to buy a replacement which would cost around £100.
He said that could he ask for an update on further copies of 'The Simple Guide to Growing Cacti and Succulents'.
T-labels – David Hawkins of Brighton branch had acquired a die and produced a small number of test labels. The surface was not quite what was needed, but it was hoped that these technical details would be ironed out in time to go into production in January.
Some of this committee would know the Chuck Everson (Rainbow Gardens) was suffering health problems and now had completely retired from selling books. His residual business had been transferred to Daiv Freeman (Exotic Plant Books) who was now our main agent in the U.S.A.

13. **Internet:**
Dr Mace said that he regretted that he had had almost no time over the last few months to work on B.C.S.S. Internet systems. The prime reason for this was that there have been serious developments on the other server which he managed – the Cactus-mall server, which was now hosting the non-B.C.S.S. cactus and succulent sites.
He said that the simultaneous failure of both RAID S.S.D. drives was unexpected and catastrophic. It took five solid days work by himself and Yann Cochard to restore the majority of the sites. A few were lost completely. Customers

were obviously very upset and he had lost some. Some problems remained, including a further loss of the apache (html) server for a day (still unexplained). He was told that the root cause of the simultaneous S.S.D. failure, was that the drives installed were of identical age and identical usage and the ideally RAID drives should not be from the same manufacturer to avoid this failure mode. This was worrying because the B.C.S.S. Fasthosts server was of identical architecture. He had subsequently negotiated a discount with Fasthosts on the Cactus Mall server, partly so that he could offer some compensation to the Cactus Mall customers. However, this had now been negated by a change in charging by cpanel who instead of charging for their software per server in future would be charging per cpanel. This had forced him to cut down on the number of free cactus accounts that he sponsored. This would also affect B.C.S.S. costs all the time we were still using the Fasthosts server.

The B.C.S.S. had a new server which supported the main website and forum and about half the branch and zone accounts. The Fasthosts B.C.S.S. supported all the F.T.P. file manager accounts and the remainder of the Branch and Zone accounts and also was needed to manage all the D.N.S. entries to direct requests to the right server. The new server ran a different control system - Plesk. He would try to get some of the F.T.P. systems transferred to the new server if he could find time this week.

He was finding it increasingly difficult to manage all these systems, particularly as they were constantly being updated. Over the years the work of managing websites had become several magnitudes more complex than it used to be. He had been trying to find assistance for this work for more than three years without any success. He was afraid he had reached the point where he must resign from this responsibility, as he no longer had the time or knowledge to perform it to a satisfactory standard.

14. **Forum and Website Report:**

Mr Hildyard said that there was not a lot to report on existing web activities. He had appointed Arthur Dixon to the web team, who had done a sterling job with Twitter and would now help with Facebook and do some editorial duties on the new website. They had set up a new Facebook group for private B.C.S.S. organisational discussion, there had been some lively debates! (https://www.facebook.com/groups/334291357520347/).

He had little to say on the new website that Mr Thwaites and Dr Snowden could not update the committee on. He had hoped to have had some suggestions with reference to Dr Mace and the server situation, but his brain wasn't really on the game at the moment. He suggested that the first thing that we should do was to pay someone to move the rest of the websites to the new server and then undertake some priority research on what we could do with the file server/storage for the journal accounts, etc.

15. **Digital Programme Library Report:**

a) Activity – Mr Lambie reported that there had been limited activity over the last few months by himself due to family activities. The team would value further volunteers to support this project. Enthusiasm was the most important skill, but broad knowledge of plants, access to reliable information about them and skills in preparing a presentation were also needed.

b) Strategy – There had been significant discussion, on Society Social Media. In particular the values of 'presentations' to the branches and how long a good presentation is. In this climate, I think that the value of these presentations, as they were produced needed advice from the BoT. Should we be targeting 20 or 30 minute, 1 hour or 1½ hour presentations?

c) Branding – Presumably we needed a copy of the branding pack.

d) John Ellis – Contact with John Ellis' widow (Anne) had been kindly made by Graham Walker. We had had her blessing to produce what we considered appropriate from John's materials.

e) Videos – David Ilett had produced some excellent videos for Society use potentially on a Society YouTube channel. David Ilett and Ian Thwaites have taken over this aspect of program delivery.

f) Scanning Continues – with a number of slides from Vic Morris. There were just over 2700 of these in total, a huge job. Scanning was not progressing as quickly as hoped, but was continuing to make positive progress.

g) Near Term Future Programmes – Resources existed for at least 2 more National Show programs. Slides had been selected for a 2016 programme, but the commentary was needed, and with no judges' comments, this would be a long job. Planned after John Ellis' programme.

h) As Before – The issue of digital delivery of programs had been highlighted as a strategy point needing some agreement. Presumably this awaited the new website, but strategy was needed on the mechanics, e.g. costs, access, etc

i) Further Options – We would welcome ideas for more digital material, specifically on Other Succulents.

19/71 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1. Rene Geissler – It was announce that he had died recently.
2. Cyprus Society – Mr Baker said that he had learnt on his recent trip that they wanted to forge closer links with our Society. **Mr Harris would include this in the next Agenda (EH)**.
3. Children's Seed Grower – This post and its criteria needed to be sorted.
4. Google Group – It was said that all current members of this committee were included in this group.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 4.51pm.

NEXT MEETING: 1st February 2020 at the Holiday Inn, London Road, Newport Pagnell, MK16 0JA (just off junction 14 of M1). It would start at 11 a.m. and a buffet lunch would be served at 1 to 1.30 p.m.