

BRITISH CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting, held on Saturday 8th February 2014 at 11.00 a.m.
at the Holiday Inn, Milton Keynes, Bucks.

Present:	Dr Alasdair Glen (AG)	Chairman
	Dr Jim Gibbs (JG)	Vice Chairman
	Mr David Kirkbright (DK)	Treasurer
	Mr Eddy Harris (EH)	Secretary
	Mr Tony Morris (TM)	Membership Secretary
	Mr Al Laius (AL)	CactusWorld Editor
	Mr Barry Tibbetts (BT)	Shows Committee Representative
	Mrs Alice Vanden Bon (AVB)	Journal Production Officer
	Dr Tony Mace (TMa)	Publications Officer
	Mr Bill Hildyard (BH)	Forum & Website Administrator
	Mr John Arnold (JA)	Legal Advisor
	Mr John Gander (JGa)	Marketing Officer
	Mrs Suzanne Mace (SM)	Committee
	Dr Roland Tebbenham (RT)	Committee
	Mr Peter Arthurs (PA)	Committee

AGREED VERSION

14/01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

14/02 MINUTES OF THE B.O.T. MEETING HELD ON 7TH DECEMBER 2013

These were formally ratified and signed.

14/03 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

13/25/1 R.H.S. Wisley Meeting – Minutes of the meeting were yet to be received so no feedback was available.

13/26/9(b) JSTOR Digital Archive – Mr Laius said that this was still in progress, and could take up to 6 months to be completed.

13/40 Society Patrons – Mr Harris had sent our welcome letter to both patrons and had received a reply from Tom Hart Dyke agreeing to our proposed terms and that he would try to publicise the Society wherever possible. He was still to receive a reply from Anne Swithinbank. It was agreed that they be invited to attend the A.G.M. and Convention, and that if intending to attend the latter, they let us know as soon as possible and also if they required overnight accommodation. (EH)

14/04 ELECTRONIC DECISION MAKING

Although there had been electronic communication among the Board members, none had involved any decision making.

14/05 COMMUNICATIONS

1. Scam Bradleya Website – Graham Charles had asked that this committee discuss this as he was concerned about its effect on both Bradleya and the Society. The site was attracting articles and then asking authors for payment to publish these. We had now registered 3 of the domains we used and this should help stop this. It was a form of internet fraud and if it occurred again would be reported to the police, but it was said that it was very difficult to stop and it seemed to be American in origin, registered in Holland and appeared to have an Iranian connection. The problem was that if one site got shut down, another using a different server and website address would be set up. Mr Hildyard said that since our action, the current site seemed to have become inactive. It was agreed that we would include the same prominent notice in CactusWorld and Bradleya stating that all articles in these would be published free of charge. This would also appear on our website and in the advice information sent out to prospective authors. (AVB/BH)

2. I.O.S. Elections – Mr Harris had received a ballot paper for this and the board agreed their choice of candidates. This would now be sent to the returning officer. (EH)

3. Deceased Member – Mr Morris had received a letter from the family asking advice on the disposal of his collection and showed pictures of this. He would contact the Luton branch secretary to which the member had belonged and if they were not interested would visit the collection himself.

4. Royal Cornwall Show – It had been learnt that Tony Irons had been approached by the organisers to put on a display and sales stand, but although able to do the sales, suggested that one of the local branches provide the display and that the organisers contact Mr Gander. He had heard nothing further and the booking date had now passed. His prime concern was the loss of an opportunity to publicise the Society. Mr Gander said that none of the branches were interested due to the substantial entry fee charged to provide this, but it was said that if the organisers provided prize money like most other shows, this could offset any entry fees, etc. It was suggested that Mr Gander contact the organisers, branches and Mr Irons to try to negotiate a better arrangement, so that a presence at next year's event could be undertaken. Mr Gander would investigate this and provide a report for discussion at a future meeting of this committee. (JGa)

5. Awards – None received since December.

14/06 REPORTS OF OFFICERS

1. Vice-Chairman:

Dr Gibbs reported that there was little to report apart from a number of requests for the latest version of the Speakers List (updated in January) and that work on the Secretary's Pack was continuing. There had also been a couple of enquiries about non-arrival of a seed order and some outdated web page information, neither of which needed referral to the relevant people.

2. **Membership Secretary:**

Mr Morris stated that since December 2013 he had enrolled 36 new members, 5 of whom had also subscribed to Bradleya. These comprised 23 Full, 6 Senior and 7 Associate. Of these, 5 were from overseas (America, Australia, Brazil and India) and 2 had joined using the Welcome Pack reduced price offer (making 38 to date). He had also re-instated 5 former members. Overseas enrolment numbers had decreased slightly from last time and the total enrolment figure was the same as last year. He had also received 11 resignations. He had been surprised to learn that there were only 6 members in South Africa. Some renewals had been problematic due to lack of information sent with the cheque or inclusion of a seed order with the renewal. He also expressed concern at the apparent lack of contact/liason between some branch secretaries and their new members.

3. **Treasurer:**

- a) **Membership** – Mr Kirkbright reported that current membership compared with last year was: Full 1,141 (-37), Senior 794 (+9), Junior 7 (-4), which when added together, the Journal taking membership total was 1,942 (-32). Associate membership was 173 (-1) and 67 Full members had switched to Senior and 35 the other way. Bradleya takers were 413 (-2). Analysis of renewal figures of pre-1st October 2008 members and those who joined from then until end of September 2013 (last 5 years), showed that of those who were members at the end of 2013 and received an invitation to renew, 77.7% of the former had renewed compared with 57.6% of the latter. Of those that joined for 2013 between 1st October 2012 and 30th September 2013, only 42.4% had currently renewed. In total 1997 (73.3%) of all members (any category) at 31st December 2013 had renewed for 2014 whilst 727 had yet to renew. He said that before we bemoaned our on-going membership decline it was worth looking at a comparable society, the A.G.S. In 2013 their membership income (and presumably numbers) fell 15%, their total income by 25%, but their expenditure only fell 18% and their deficit for the year rose by £76,000. On average over the last 5 years they had lost £50,000 per year. All figures were from their accounts published on the Charity Commission website.
- b) **Donations paid with Subscriptions** – As previously mentioned, with 40% of subscriptions (U.K./Foreign/Bradleya) being paid via PayPal, the ratio of added donations had fallen. In 2012 donations represented 8.2% added value to traditionally paid subscriptions, but only 3.8% via PayPal on the website. In 2013 these were 8.3% and 2.4% respectively and whilst it was too early for accurate comparative figures for 2014, these were currently 10.8% and 2.7% respectively. If, as he expected, these trends continued, the Conservation/Research Fund would gradually dry up. With the current low number of grants, appeals for donations to the fund could not be easily made, but the situation needed to be kept under review.
- c) **Journal Issues** – Following a meeting between David Quail and Charlesworth, the agreed final bill for the September journal was reduced by £1,268.37, comprising a reduction in production costs of £784.99 and their complete waiving of their mailing costs (not postage) of £483.38. The resultant net bill was settled just before Xmas and he wished to officially thank Mr Quail, for without his persistent pressure for a satisfactory explanation of the problems, this would not have happened.
- d) **Convention 2014** – To date 123 residential and 10 non-residential bookings (including speakers) plus 1 non-delegate trader had been received, and 41 of the 44 sales tables had been taken. Having checked with the University about their current policy on cancellations these numbers meant there was no cost penalty on unused rooms.
- e) **Calendar** – The price was reduced to £3.50 from 18th January. Gross sales since launch were £1598, £217 of which was taken through December/January, prior to the Facebook plug or price reduction. Break-even point shortfall was currently £68. It was agreed that we produce another next year, but that perhaps the quality (photographs/paper) be improved.
- f) **Publications** – The situation surrounding the *Agave* book was still unclear and to date no payment to the printers had been made. The stock position remaining with the printers was still very uncertain. Sales to date were in line with our estimates and approximately 60% of its cost still remained to be recovered. This was probably due in part to existing stock at dealers needing to sell through.
- g) **Seed Sales** – Takings to date before VAT and expenses were £4,630, some £495 more than last year with some sales still to come. Seed costs were substantially higher this year, but 518 orders were received, including 58 of the special order package, 108 of the seed lots had now sold out and 28 had less than 10 packs left. Mr Capel had also sent out 62 of the new revised seed raising leaflets. Some orders had had to be refunded due to lack of seed type ordered. Mr Arthurs said that choice of seed had improved but the costs had substantially increased.

4. **Shows Committee:**

- a) **Judges Course** – Mr Tibbetts reported that booking for the 2014 course were 23 to date of which 11 were delegates, the remainder being committee and speakers. He gave details of the speakers and their subjects. The 2015 course would be held on 4th–6th September.
- b) **RHS Banksian Medal** – It had been decided to award this to a different large show each year, except when awarded at the National Show. This year's show would be the one at Oxford on 3rd August 2014.
- c) **Shows Committee Elections** – This year's nominees were Messrs Darbon, Stansbie and Tibbetts and as there were no other nominees would be re-elected unopposed. There was only 1 nomination for the late Cathy Darbon's position which was Ian Robinson, so he would be elected for a 2 year period unopposed.
- d) **Handbook of Shows 10th Edition** – There had been further amendments to the final version following proof reading, but after making these final changes, the file had been returned to Mrs Vanden Bon and the booklet should be available for distribution at the A.G.M. (*see also minute 14/06/10*)

5. **Conservation Committee:**

Dr Maddams in a written report said that he had nothing to report in advance of their meeting to be held in March.

6. **Research Committee:**

Mr Hill in a written report gave details of the proposal from Dr Boris Schlumpberger of Herrenhausen Gardens, Hannover entitled 'Relationships and Evolution in the *Oreocereus* clade (Cactaceae)'. This proposed an international cooperation of both amateur and professional botanists to understand the relationships within a mainly (but not exclusively) Peruvian cactus clade containing for example the genera *Matucana*, *Borzicactus* and *Haageocereus* and to infer evolutionary processes. Of special interest would be the evolution of floral adaptations to pollinators, but also the evolution of growth form. The full cost would be £3,500 and the involved personnel would be Dr Schlumpberger, Prof. Dr Hanno Schafer of Munich University

(supervising the lab work and data analysis), Messrs. Graham Charles and Paul Hoxey (U.K.) (specialists in this group and acting as advisors and major sources of material from their documented collections), Christoph Heibl of Munich University (helping the data analysis, i.e. phylogenetic reconstruction and ancestral state reconstruction) and Barbara Weigell of Munich University (performing the lab work, data analysis and phylogenetic reconstruction). He said that this was a group of plants popular with B.C.S.S. members and the research/science to be used was simple and straightforward and the material for analysis and provided by Messrs. Charles and Hoxey was from well documented and an exceptionally dense sampling of ex-habitat material. The results would be of interest many in our Society and provide further clarification in the *Trichocereae*, an area needing better understanding. A paper on the results would be provided for Bradleya. Despite involvement of two B.C.S.S. members, the money provided would be used to fund the German scientists' work only. The research committee asked that the Society fund the full amount although it was over the current limit of £2,000 and this was unanimously agreed by this committee.

7. **Advertising/Journal Production Officers:**

- a) Advertising – Mr Quail in a written report said that the 1st quarter advertising income was £531 (£593 for the same time last year) and that one series-of-4 advertiser had been lost this quarter, but a previous advertiser had resumed advertising.
- b) CactusWorld Production Trainees – He said that Christian Bohm's training had now restarted.
- c) September Journal Printing Problems – These had now been discussed with Charlesworth on 17th December and concluded amicably with a significant reduction on the September printing invoice and an admission that they were at fault. It was accepted that there had been some mitigating circumstances and that they might have now resolved some of the worst problems, but they accepted that we would not be printing journals with them this year, but might well ask them to quote for other work, including any books. A possible way back to future journal printing was therefore left open. Very satisfactory meetings with both new printing companies (Cambrian and Warner) had taken place and both looked suitable and provided very satisfactory printing quotes for this year. One had already satisfactorily printed a trial job (Welcome Pack page reprint) and further trials would take place shortly and one of them invited to print the September journal. Our second existing printer (Swallowtail) had provided satisfactory quotes for 2014 and been invited to print the March, June and December journals.

8. **Bradleya Editor:**

Mr Charles in a written report said that he had nothing to report concerning Bradleya 32 except that he now had 2 articles plus items from himself and Paul Hoxey, including a new cactus species from Peru. He expressed concern about the fake website and fraudulent impersonation of Bradleya and hoped that the Trustees would discuss the threat and agree a course of action to minimise the impact on Bradleya and the Society (*see also minute 14/05/1*).

9. **Journal Editor:**

Mr Laius reported that the December issue had been well received and attached a series of complimentary comments to his report. This was echoed by Mr Arnold. The large backlog of articles had now been mainly cleared thanks to last year's two bumper issues and he was on course for more normal sized issues for the first half of 2014. Currently he had 19 articles in hand, 7 of which were laid out and 12 in progress. Another 8 had been promised and due to arrive shortly, so there was sufficient for the March and June journals. He would also like to acknowledge David Quail's behind the scenes work contribution, for although he had largely stepped out of the limelight, his contribution to the technical side of journal production remained as strong as ever. He expressed concern and frustration that after 2 years as Editor, we still had no online presence either with Bradleya or CactusWorld. He felt that it should be addressed urgently and that journal pages should be available as a download to paying members for those who preferred not to receive a paper copy.

10. **Technical Editor:**

Mrs Vanden Bon reported that the March journal would be printed by Swallowtail, that its preparation was on schedule and would be with them at the agreed time. She reported that layout and proof reading of the 10th edition of the Handbook of Shows was progressing despite a large number of last minute corrections and would be sent for printing after the March journal work was completed. All printed copies would be sent to Dr Mace for distribution in time for the A.G.M., although a box would be given to Bill Darbon at the A.G.M. for Shows Committee use. She emphasised that it was important that all documents submitted for layout be fully checked, approved and ready for publication before submission. She was currently laying out John Pilbeam's revised and updated '**Stapeliad**' book and it was agreed that we aim for a print run of some 600 copies. It was suggested that a revised membership application form be produced with different pictures and background colour.

11. **Publications/Internet Server Officers:**

- a) Publications – Dr Mace reported that sales were reasonably brisk in January, although there were recent signs of a slight slow-down. He said that after buying a box of '**Stapeliads**' from John Pilbeam, most had been sold with only 2 copies remaining. Stocks of National Show CDs were now down to 9 and that the recent price reduction of the Calendar did produce a few orders, but he did not expect to sell many more. He had been including a free copy with bulk orders to regular dealers, hoping that these might order some next year.
- b) Internet/Forum – Mr Hildyard said that he had little to report on the operational side of these as both were fine.

12. **Update on the Society Digital Programmes:**

Dr Tebbenham reported the current progress on this was unchanged from the December meeting and details of these were given. He said 4 to 6 of those programmes in preparation should be available by April 2014. Dr Gibbs planned to scan the late Vic Morris' 2,000 slides over the next year and the 900 annotated slides taken by the late Jan Meyer would be reviewed and the most appropriate ones scanned for use as a reference collection. The scanning equipment would be loaned for this exercise and that he was to discuss formulation of new commentaries with Victoria Burton. David Greenaway had provided a digital/slide programme library usage chart for the last 10 years which was attached to the report. He said that it was intended to advertise the digital programmes in the future, but that branches requiring use of the slide programmes could do so until they became unusable, when they would be scrapped.

13. **Website:**

Messrs Arthurs & Hildyard said that due to time restraints the planned update/changes to the Society website were yet to happen, but hopefully should be done in the next two weeks. It was said that the Twitter and FaceBook sites were running okay, and that people wishing to use these should send the information to the designated people and the information would then be posted, rather than trying to post the information themselves.

14. **2014 Society Convention Update:**

Mr Arnold said that since the last meeting he had contacted all booked participants in pursuit of auction donations, but only 8 had responded, one of whom had also offered help. However, as a result of the appeal in the December CactusWorld, June Jenkins had offered an item from her husband Tom which might raise interest, although she was the only response the appeal had achieved. The appeal for donations and help would be repeated in the next CactusWorld. Mr Kirkbright would provide forms for donors to complete so that Gift Aid could be claimed on the proceeds of the auction. Mr Arnold aimed to list the auction lots in the programme. Progress on other items was continuing and further advice on timings, etc., was given by those involved in previous Conventions. Decisions on the final meal menus would be left until nearer the event. There had been correspondence on ways of encouraging more plant sales by allowing attendees only interested in buying plants and thus encouraging more nurseries to attend, but there was the problem of policing the sales areas during talks and discussion of this by this meeting resulted in it being felt that the event was primarily a Convention not a plant sales event. There was a possibility of having a separate sales event in conjunction with future Conventions, but this required detailed planning to avoid interference with the Convention, would need to be self-financing and could be limited by the Health and Safety licence for the maximum number of people allowed in each of the sales rooms. It was agreed that the Trustees would provide the convention raffle prizes and several suggestions for the goody bag contents were made.

15. **Marketing Officer:**

Mr Gander gave details of the items he had either completed or were being worked on since our last meeting and made a number of suggestions that he felt needed to be considered, including one that the B.C.S.S. Events page be updated in early January to avoid conflict of events. He had investigated the cost of various makes/forms of banners and said that the cheaper ones might only last for a few events. This was then discussed in further detail. He asked for promotional information for our A.G.M so that he could promote it more effectively and that he and Mr Laius received training in the use of Facebook and Twitter so that they could use it more effectively (*see also minute 14/06/13*).

14/07 **BRANCH OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Four nominations had been received, but the committee of one of the nominated branches had then decided not to be considered, although the points covered might form the basis of a future nomination. As one of the other branches nominated was Macclesfield, Dr Glen withdrew from the discussion on this and the remaining two and Dr Gibbs took the chair. It was then said that in hindsight the rules for this year's award were not specific enough and needed to be changed for future years, but for this year the nominated branches were assessed against the published criteria. After some discussion it was agreed that from the information provided, both Bradford and Macclesfield were very similar and were therefore chosen as joint winners of the award. It was also agreed that they would each receive £100 to be presented at the A.G.M. A covering article would be provided for CactusWorld (**JG**) and more specific rules would be considered and discussed at the next meeting for publication in the September journal. (**All Committee**)

14/08 **SOCIETY A.G.M.**

It was reported that there had been no additional nominations for Main Officer positions due for re-election (President, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and annual Trustees) so all current officers would be re-elected unopposed. The same was true for the Shows Committee positions (*see minute 14/06/4(c)*). As only 3 nominations for the 4 annual Trustee positions had been received, it was suggested that perhaps with the current reducing membership, we considered reducing the number of nominees to 3 rather than 4. As this required a rule change, it could not happen until April 2015. A recommendation to this effect would be prepared. (**SM/JA**) The Hampshire/Dunn Memorial lecture would be given by our President Dr Colin Walker speaking on '**Agaves**'.

14/09 **FUTURE PUBLICATIONS**

There were no publications currently planned.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 5.03pm.

NEXT MEETING: 26th April 2014 at the Holiday Inn, London Road, Newport Pagnell, MK16 0JA (just off junction 14 of M1). It would start at 11a.m. and a buffet lunch would be served at 1p.m. *Post-meeting update* – Mr Gander gave advanced apologies for non-attendance due to a prior engagement.