

BRITISH CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting, held on Saturday 11th May 2013 at 11.00 a.m.
at the Holiday Inn, Milton Keynes, Bucks.

<u>Present:</u>	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
	Mr Bill Hildyard (BH)	Forum Moderator
	Mr John Gander (JGa)	Marketing Officer
	Dr Roland Tebbenham (RT)	Committee
	Mr Peter Arthurs (PA)	Committee
	Mr Martin Doorbar (MD)	Non Trustee Marketing Officer (Present for Minute 13/17 only)

AGREED VERSION

Before the meeting commenced Dr Glen welcomed Messrs Arthurs and Gander to the meeting following their election/appointment.

13/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Dr Tony & Mrs Suzanne Mace, Mr John Arnold. Mr Kirkbright gave an update on Mrs Mace's progress following her recent operation. He said that things were going well and that she wished to thank all who had sent her messages/cards. He had also collected a batch of the new membership forms which Trustees could have for their branches.

13/11 ACCEPTANCE OF TRUSTEESHIP

Messrs Arthurs and Gander had both indicated their willingness to become Trustees and after it was explained what this involved, were given the appropriate form to complete and sign. These would then be uploaded on to the Charities Commission website (JA).

13/12 MINUTES OF THE B.O.T. MEETING HELD ON 9TH FEBRUARY 2013

These were formally ratified and signed.

13/13 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

12/44/10(b) Publications Store – The disposal of unwanted stock had now been done.

13/05/6 Awards – Mr Ellis had emailed Mr Harris thanking the Society for his 2 awards which had come as a complete surprise.

13/12/1 Epiphyllum Society – In response to a query, Mr Harris said that he had suggested that Mike BurrIDGE contact Dr Preston and Mr Horobin, but had heard nothing further. Dr Tebbenham would check with the former if contact had been made.

13/14 ELECTRONIC DECISION MAKING

1. There had been email discussion on the subject of who would decide the annual winner of the most innovative branch award but no consensus had been reached. Further discussion at this meeting resulted in it being agreed that initially this Board would do so and this and the rules for applying would appear in the September journal (AG).

2. Audio Journal – A Norwich branch member had emailed Mr Harris asking permission to produce an audio version of the journal for a branch member who was visually impaired. The Board had given permission and also offered payment of any costs and it had also been said that this had been done before via the R.N.I.B. It was asked what had happened since and Mr Harris said that he had informed the member of our decision and the previous arrangement, but that the member had said that he would proceed with the exercise, would also mention it on the Branch Officials' area of the Forum in case it might be of use to anyone else and that he did not need any reimbursement of expenses. The main software used was Audacity which was public domain freeware (and very good!) and the USB microphone was cheap (but excellent quality). He would also follow up the R.N.I.B. link as well.

13/15 COMMUNICATIONS

1. Sheffield Branch – Another letter had been received from Peter Cowdell giving all the contacts he had made locally and the responses achieved. This had been distributed to several of the Board of Trustees. He had also asked another member if boxes of the information packs could be supplied and this was agreed, but on a sale or return basis.

2. Awards – 1 A.O.M award was agreed.

13/16 REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Vice-Chairman:

Dr Gibbs said that Eltham branch had indicated that they wished to merge with Bromley branch and that both he and Mr Harris had spoken to Eltham officials about this. The Eltham branch secretary had been made aware of the procedure necessary to do so. He had also been made aware of problems within the Coventry and South Norfolk branches which he was currently following up. His recent exercise to obtain details of all branch contacts and venues had had mixed results in that although this had been achieved, there was a reluctance from some branch Chairmen and Treasurers to provide details without assurance about its subsequent use. During discussion of this point, it was said that there was a standard

statement of disclosure on the new membership application form which complied with the data protection act. He also said that in line with that agreed at the last meeting he had produced a condensed version of the ideas and initiatives from Sheffield branch and now that the Marketing Officers had been appointed, had passed this to them for consideration. It was also reported that York branch had achieved another Gold Medal at the recent Harrogate Spring Show.

2. **Membership Secretary:**

Mr Morris stated that since February 2013 he had enrolled 36 new members, 4 of whom had also subscribed to Bradleya. These comprised 17 Full, 12 Senior, 4 Associate, and 3 Junior. Of these, only 1 was an overseas member (UK but currently living in Belgium) and 1 had joined using the Welcome Pack reduced price offer (making 25 to date). He had also re-instated 5 former members. He said that the lateness of some renewals had resulted in 207 March journals having to be mailed out and lost journals continued to be an irritating problem, not helped by the increased postal charge of £3.50 to European destinations. He had had a number of members who had written explaining their reasons for discontinuing their membership and some of these were read out. He finished by stating that it had been felt that the current car sticker was in need of an update and thanks to Mrs Vanden Bon a new design had been produced and was now available for sale at 50p each. Samples were shown and a number sold. Mr Gander asked if the Board would consider issuing one of the new car stickers free to each Society member as a marketing exercise, but it was pointed out that not all members had a car and there was no guarantee they would not be scrapped on receipt. It could be an expensive gesture with little return.

3. **Treasurer:**

- a) **Membership** – Mr Kirkbright reported that current membership compared with last year was: Full 1435 (-150), Senior 916 (+13), Junior 19 (+3), which when added together, the Journal taking membership total was 2370 (-134). Associate membership was 201 (-22) whilst 2013 Bradleya subscriptions were 503 (-9). 94 Full members had switched to Senior, 29 the other way. He said that this was a very disappointing position as the year on year effect of his chase up reminders was now minimal. All outstanding non-renewed members had either been emailed or sent a letter. He said that there was little difference between UK and overseas renewal percentages.
- b) **Alloe Book** – A further £11,000 had been received on sales of this by Kew.
- c) **Gift Aid** – Having now mastered the new on-line H.M.R.C. Charities system, he had now submitted our Gift Aid claims. The new system only allowed 1000 records at a time whilst our total was around 1450.
- d) **Journal Issues** – At the suggestion of David Quail, he had withheld £1,400 (approximately 25%) from the payments to Charlesworth in an attempt to get some response from them, following their lack of response/acknowledgement to Mr Quail's numerous complaints about the mess they had created with the March journal.
- e) **Society 'T' Labels** – Following the recent death of Doug Rowland, his widow had given the Society some 9,000 labels and the equipment he used to produce them. Jeff Capel had agreed to undertake the future manufacture and supply of these labels on similar terms to Doug.
- f) **Convention 2014** – To date only 36 bookings (including speakers) had been received, including 10 sales tables. It was suggested that it be advertised in the online 'Cactus Explorer' produced by Graham Charles (**JGa**)
- g) **Publications** – Sales were generally slow and that of 'Succulents in Nature' non-existent; 325 further copies being needed to break even. It was suggested that this also be advertised in 'Cactus Explorer' (**JGa**).

4. **Shows Committee:**

- a) **2016 National Show** – Mr Tibbetts reported that the last meeting's comments had been relayed to the Shows Committee and after further discussion it had been agreed that the show would be held on the Friday/Saturday and after setting up on the Friday morning, staging would commence from midday to 6pm and from 7am to 10am on the Saturday. Judging would take place between 10.15am to 11.15am and the show would be open for viewing from 11.30am until 6pm. Clearing the hall would be from 6pm to 7pm. This would allow a total of 6½ hours for viewing. Nurseries could set up from midday to 6pm on Friday and 7am to 9am on Saturday and sales would be open from 9am to 6pm. This had been confirmed with Wood Green at no additional cost.
- b) **2012 National Show DVD** – Work on producing this was now complete and following final quality trials by Messrs Foster and Thwaites, would be available from mid-May from Dr & Mrs Mace. Cost would be £6 including postage or £5 if collected from a pre-arranged point or for orders of 5 or more. There was some discussion on if this would include the 3D glasses required for some of the material.
- c) **2013 Judges Course** – The final programme had been agreed and judging tests reviewed and finalised. 20 bookings had been received to date plus the 9 committee and 3 speakers. The target of 45/50 attendees should hopefully be achieved.
- d) **Proposed 10th Edition of the Handbook of Shows** – Ray Stephenson had now provided an updated draft incorporating all suggestions and views received and this was reviewed and minor changes made. Updated copies would be distributed to all attendees of the Judges Course and non-attending judges. After discussion at the course, final views would be sought over a 4 week period after which the final version would be submitted for printing as soon as possible, ready for the 2014 show season. He said that although copies were distributed free to all judges and branches, the Shows Committee felt that it should also be free to other members, as was the 'Organising Exhibitions and Shows', rather than having to pay the current £2 per copy including postage. It was said by Board members that the latter booklet was a lower quality one produced by laser printer and only distributed to judges and branch secretaries, whilst the former was of a much better quality and produced professionally at a significant cost. It would be possible to download a copy from our website, but it was felt that most interested members would still prefer to buy a hard copy. It was agreed to print 1000 copies.

5. **Conservation Committee:**

Dr Maddams in a written report said that due to bad weather conditions, no March meeting of the committee had taken place. No additional items apart from those reported at the A.G.M. had been received.

6. **Research Committee:**

Mr Hill in a written report said that there was nothing additional to that reported at the A.G.M.

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

- a) Advertising – Mr Quail in a written report said that the 2nd quarter advertising income was £448, compared with £480 for the same time last year, but that there had been no change in the number of series-of-4 advertisers for this quarter. ELK were advertising with us for the first time with a ½ page in full colour. He had still to find a replacement for his position but would continue until this was achieved.
- b) Journal Production Trainees – He said that training the remaining 3 trainees remained slow and spasmodic although he had been able to respond reasonably promptly to anything they produced. Sheila Cude had taken over as News Coordinator. She had experience of using Quark, although with an earlier version and via a Mac and he was in discussion with her about upgrading to a newer version to provide 2-way compatibility with that used by the current team. He had also sent her details of our technical standards and the current intent was that she would progress over a period from the basic collating/editing of the Branch News reports to laying out the whole quarterly BCSS News section of the journal in Quark. This would be a great help to the team as it needed somewhat different treatment to journal article production and would benefit from 1 person doing it regularly.
- c) Marketing/Membership numbers – He expressed concern over the recent membership numbers and hoped that this would be addressed urgently in conjunction with an agreed plan of campaign from the new Marketing Officers. Dr Mace had responded saying that the increase in heating costs had been a significant contributing factor.
- d) Journal Production – Mrs Vanden Bon reported that articles for the June journal had been laid out well in advance, ready for the journal to be compiled by Stephen Morris so that it was ready for Swallowtail Printers on May 16th. Due to their unsatisfactory March print run performance, Charlesworth were being re-assessed as one of our printers. Explanations were still awaited of the postal problems experienced with bulk mailing of extra copies and inserts. She also thanked Dr Gibbs for contacting Zone Reps to gather updated information of branch secretaries and venue changes for the 2013 Officials List. Several changes we were not aware of became apparent as a result of the exercise. She asked that any future changes be passed directly to her so that the list could be constantly updated.

8. **Bradleya Editor:**

Mr Charles in a written report said that further articles had been sent or promised so it looked like there would be enough for Bradleya 31 to be published around June, assuming the promises materialised. Almost half the articles were about cacti. He had paginated 81 pages and the *Trichodiadema* article was ready to paginate. He would now contact the printer, confirm the price with them and Mr Kirkbright, and then do a trial with one of the files.

9. **Journal Editor:**

Mr Laius reported that after the June Journal had gone to print, he would currently have 24 articles in hand, 12 of which had already been designed and laid out, 7 required laying out and 5 were work in progress. He said that there seemed to be no shortage of articles coming in (apart from ‘In my Greenhouse’ ones) and he had not had to commission/contact potential authors recently. He had started contacting authors to ask how many off prints and journals they wanted in addition to the article pdf which he had attached to the email and surprisingly over half only wanted a few copies, some required none and only one required 25. This would save up to £100 to £120/year in postage. There could be a further saving from the printer if he halved the number of off prints requested and he would request 25 instead of 50 for the June journal. With the increase in articles received, he was conscious that some authors were concerned of the time taken for their articles to appear in print and asked if it was possible to increase future journal sizes to reduce this backlog. Points raised during discussion of this were that whilst it would be possible, there was concern over whether larger journals would fit in the current journal binders and what style of journal binding would be adequate and not compromise price and appearance. Enquiries on these points would be made before a decision was made (AL).

10. **Publications Officer:**

Publications – Dr Mace in a written report said that book sales were still relatively sluggish and only boosted by a few bulk orders from dealers.

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

Dr Tebbenham gave the current progress on this (32 of the 61 projected programmes currently ready for use and gave details of the 10 additional ones just released). He and Dr Gibbs were currently working on converting the last 5 of the original library programmes, some of which had quality and commentary problems and which they were addressing. In addition to the above, priorities needed to be set for the various slide bequests in hand. These were those from Doug Donaldson, Sonia Barker-Fricker, Cyril Pritchett and Chris Rodgeron plus the recent National Shows. Some were in progress, others needed more information which he was trying to establish. He had compiled a piece for the June CactusWorld which explained the project, its progress to date and advertising our plan and ideas. He and Dr Gibbs would also be contacting speakers who had said that they would/might offer digital programmes to the library.

12. **Forum/Website:**

Mr Hildyard reported that the Forum was progressing well and that Tony Roberts had been appointed as the new moderator. However, more work needed to be done with our Facebook site, which needed a new person to post items. It had currently passed over 1,000 followers. He said that current entries for the photo competition were yet to reach double figures, but hopefully with the advent of better weather, this would improve. He also said that Peter Arthurs had made good progress with the new website and that he had made him an administrator on the Forum to help with his website work. He felt it would be useful for him to remain as a backup. Mr Arthurs then gave a short update on his progress with the website and said that the work was very close to completion, but there had been problems in certain areas such as the Forum and providing a permission system for downloading articles. These were associated with our database system, were solvable, but were taking time to achieve as individual modification of each Society member’s information was required (PA/DK). The system would then be independently tested before being brought into use. It would also require setting up new accounts on the new server for the journal team and other users.

13. **2014 Society Convention Update:**

In the absence of Mr Arnold the current situation was not known apart from what had been reported previously. As timing was becoming critical and with the low booking numbers, it was agreed that certain aspects needed to be undertaken now, such as the appeal for items for the auction and a process devised for separating full programme delegates and day visitors paying to attend the lectures from those attending just for the plant sales. Pen portraits of all booked speakers and the titles of their talks were also needed, both for the convention programme and the advance notice in the journal. Mr Kirkbright gave details of the cost of cancellation for the last convention at various points in time before the event, which if this was done, could result in a cost penalty of up to £19,000. It also needed to be publicised on the internet/Forum (**BH**), Cactus Explorer (**JGa/AVB**) and at the E.L.K. (**AM/SM**). *Post Meeting Update* – Mr Kirkbright had now written to all attendees of the last convention inviting them to this one.

14. **Marketing Officer:**

In addition to his and Martin Doorbar's presentation to the meeting (*see minute 13/17*), John Gander said that he was preparing an overall summary of Peter Cowdell's work (Sheffield Branch) and said that he was willing to take any of the correspondence other Board members had or would receive from Mr Cowdell, so that he could review everything and produce a working document for distribution to all branch secretaries. He asked if our advert. in the Cactus Explorer could be increased to a full page one (agreed) and would contact Graham Charles to see if this was possible (**JGa**). He also felt that the Society Facebook and Twitter sites could be valuable marketing tools and could be expanded. He also wanted to provide more sets of display boards so that sets could be kept and be available in different parts of the country. Mr Kirkbright said that providing suitable pricing, types and people to look after them could be obtained, this would not be a problem. He also asked what budget would be allocated for Marketing, how claims were authorised and what marketing material already existed within the Society and answers to these questions were given. The question of a public figurehead/patron for the Society was raised and Ann Swithinbank was again mentioned as a possibility. Mr Quail was still in contact with her and it was suggested that her details be passed to Mr Gander to follow up (**JGa**).

13/17 **MARKETING OFFICERS' PLAN OF CAMPAIGN**

Messrs Doorbar and Gander distributed copies of their proposed strategy, the initial objectives being to raise public awareness, stop the decline in membership and branch closures, expand both domestic and international membership, these then leading to a sustainable revenue and Society. Mr Morris said that the most important topic needing to be addressed was to halt the current loss of membership and it was agreed that this would be given more emphasis. Points contained within the strategy were then expanded with Mr Doorbar taking the lead in the presentation. He said the strategy list was a series of ideas which would be refined following this meeting. The list indicated a need to raise public awareness, both at external major shows and at local level, each then having a series of aspects to be addressed under sub-headings, including more press and TV publicity where possible. There was also a need to improve and expand our current membership drive, both domestically and internationally and again a series of points to be addressed on this were also listed. The final section gave a proposed timing plan for the points indicated over the next 4 years, the majority of those planned for this year being to identify and quantify the work needed to achieve the proposals. There was discussion on how members joined and the need to monitor the turnover of those joining via the internet and where they learned of the Society, the effectiveness of local radio/paper publicity, and improving major press coverage and the publicity material available. It was said that that there was no guarantee that all the suggested ideas would work but we needed to try them anyway and that any additional points/ideas raised by the Board would be welcome. Both were thanked by Dr Glen for their suggested plan of campaign.

13/18 **FUTURE PUBLICATIONS**

Mrs Vanden Bon said that although Mr Pilbeam was making some minor changes, the *Agave* book should be published by late June. In the current climate and poor sales of 'Succulents in Nature' it was felt that we would not fund new titles in the immediate future. Dr Mace had suggested a book by Paul Spracklin on 'Gardening with Succulents, Xeroscaping in a Cool Climate', but there was some resistance to the idea within the meeting. Two other publications were also suggested, one of which might be a possibility.

13/19 **CURRENT PROGRESS ON THE BRANCH INFORMATION CD**

Dr Tebbenham said that all current information was to be passed to the Marketing Officers who would review this and then hopefully suggest what should be included on the CD (**JGa/MD**). It would also include updated versions of what was currently in the Secretary's Pack.

13/20 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1. **Funding of an annual travel scholarship**

This had been discussed previously at the May 2012 Board meeting but following a query at the recent A.G.M. it had been agreed that the Board would consider it again. The proposal put forward by the Conservation/Research committees was that the Society would fund one annual travel scholarship (up to £1,000) for a student to visit a habitat as part of their educational requirements. Applications would be sought each year and the 2 committees would then assess their relative merits and choose the most deserving one. This would meet our published educational objective and the committees felt the money should be paid from general funds rather than the Conservation/Research fund which had/was donated by Society members for Conservation/Research projects.

After extensive discussion on the topic it was agreed that the Society would fund one such award per year as suggested, but that the money should come from the Conservation/Research fund. Mr Kirkbright pointed out that a very large portion of the money currently in this fund (now in the order of £59,000) came from the profit on the recent *Aloe* book published by Kew and a significant Society bequest, all of which had been allocated by this Board to the fund, and was not just from members who specifically donated for conservation/research. It was felt that part of this *Aloe* money could be nominally used to fund the exercise. It was also suggested that the winning student could provide a short report on their trip.

2. Seed Donation – At the recent A.G.M. there had been discussion on members' seed donations and it was asked how we could cope with small donations. It was said that the example mentioned from the floor in that discussion referred to the Alpine Society seed list which was considerably larger than ours and consequently could cope with small quantities due to the very wide interests of its members. Mr Arthurs said that he realistically needed at least 500 seeds minimum/item to satisfy our own members' needs and in this quantity the cost rose significantly from commercial sources especially with other succulent seed. His current seed sources were also currently not changing their annual offerings significantly which did not help.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 4.25pm.

NEXT MEETING: 28th September 2013 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.