

BRITISH CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on
Saturday, 7th February 2009 at 11.30 am, at the Holiday Inn, Milton Keynes, Bucks.

<u>Present:</u>	Mr John Arnold (JA)	Chairman
	Dr Alasdair Glen (AG)	Vice Chairman
	Mr David Kirkbright (DK)	Treasurer
	Mr Eddy Harris (EH)	Secretary
	Mr David Slade (DS)	Membership Secretary
	Mr David Quail (DQ)	Advertising & Journal Production Officer
	Mr Roy Mottram (RM)	CactusWorld Editor
	Dr Tony Mace (AM)	Publications & Internet Officer
	Mr Barry Tibbetts (BT)	Shows Committee Representative
	Mrs Suzanne Mace (SM)	Committee
	Mrs Alice Vanden Bon (AVB)	Committee
	Mr Tony Morris (TM)	Committee
	Dr Roland Tebbenham (RT)	Committee
	Mr Bill Hildyard (BH)	Forum Moderator (Coopted)

AGREED VERSION

09/01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Dr Colin Walker (CW).

09/02 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH DECEMBER 2008

These were formally ratified and signed

09/03 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

07/45 Society Logo – Since the last meeting, Mr Hildyard had produced a number of designs and variations of these and circulated these by email. Mr Quail asked if everybody accepted the most recent design but there were a number who felt that it was either not what was wanted or should not have a flower included. A vote on this latter opinion showed there was a very small majority in favour. After further discussion, it was agreed (11 votes to 3) that the design be further developed by Mr Hildyard (different flower colour and/or flower position) and members let Mr Quail know their opinions of these and then a vote would be taken. Thanks were expressed for the work that Mr Hildyard had done in producing the designs.

08/43/1 R.H.S. – Mr Mottram had compiled the article which had now been sent for inclusion.

09/04 ELECTRONIC DECISION MAKING

None

09/05 COMMUNICATIONS

1. December Journal – A letter had been received by Mr Harris expressing concern over the humorous content of this when the member felt that an emphasis on encouraging membership renewal should have been its aim. An email expressing appreciation of the issue had also been received. It was said that the general reaction to the issue had been an overwhelming appreciation of the issue and that renewals were up on previous years.
2. Garden News – This publication was reorganising their web site and were to include a section for details of speakers and judges willing to offer their services to other organisations. An application form was available but applications had to be made individually. Details had already been passed to the Shows Committee about judges and this would be mentioned at the next Judges Course, but Mr Harris felt that this should be added to our intent to offer speaker details to other organisations (*minute 08/45/3*). Following discussion, it was agreed that a small number of the application form be made available at the A.G.M. (**E.H.**) and that speakers be canvassed and made aware of this offer. (**A.G.**)
3. Highlands & Islands Branch – This had written asking for a grant to help run their 2009 branch show, providing balances sheets, etc to support the request. One of the major expenses was that associated with booking a judge due to distance and local inability to provide accommodation. Examination of the financial breakdown for the show also showed other possible savings that could be made and after discussion on these and other points, it was agreed that a one off grant of up to a maximum of £75 would be made to cover the judge's expenses, this to be paid directly to the judge. Various possible cost savings would also be suggested. (**E.H.**)
4. Northern Ireland Speaking Trip – A request had been received from the speaker to fund this. After discussion it was agreed that a maximum of £100 would be granted to cover this. It had also been suggested that Dublin branch be included in the trip.
5. Nairn Garden Club – The show secretary wished to publicise our Society at their August show and had requested publicity material. A batch of membership forms, etc would be sent (**A.M.**)
6. Children's Cactus Book – Mr Arnold had received information about this asking if this would be of interest to Society members. It was agreed that it be mentioned on the Cactus Mall site (**A.M.**).
7. R.H.S. Trainee Dissertation – An email from an R.H.S. Rosemoor trainee wishing to speak to nurseries and members about Cacti and Succulents as part of her dissertation had been received by Mr Harris. He had directed her to our web

site for information on nurseries but could not give any members names due to the Data Protection Act. He asked if anybody present was willing to be contacted and it was suggested that she join the Society, where official's names and email addresses were readily available and/or join the B.C.S.S. Forum.

8. R.H.S. Article – Mr Harris had been contacted by somebody commissioned by the R.H.S. to provide an article on affiliated Societies and which would appear in the April issue of Garden. He wished to know our views on the R.H.S. and how we were coping. Mr Harris had given him these details including the fact that he felt that the R.H.S. was not serving its affiliated Societies as well as they should. Most of his views were similar to those of other Societies that had been contacted.
9. Awards – 1 A.O.M. was approved. Another A.O.M and an R.H.M.A. were not approved.

09/06 REPORTS OF OFFICERS

1. Vice-Chairman:

Dr Glen reported that Richard Purslow was the new Zone 14 rep. and that reps. from three other zones wished to stand down and needed replacements. He had distributed the supplementary questionnaire to all branch secretaries and zone reps. and these were starting to be returned. He had also conferred with Ray Stephenson about distributing our Speakers List to other organisations but needed to email all speakers to get their assent to their details being passed on.

2. Membership Secretary:

Mr Slade reported that from 1st October to 3rd February he had enrolled 92 new members compared with 43 for about the same period last year. These comprised 65 Full (32), 17 Senior (8), 2 Junior (0) and 8 Associate (3) a total increase of 49 (114%). 56 of these had enrolled since 11th December, 21 were from overseas and it was noticeable that the ratio of Full to Senior was well up. 7 lapsed members had rejoined. Of the 92 enrolled, 56 joined via the internet, 16 came via branches and 10 via major shows. Subscription renewals were going well and the early availability of CactusWorld had helped with this. It was agreed to add Alan Titchmarsh to the free literature list for the coming year. Mr Slade would hand over to Tony Morris on 31st May/1st June after sending off the address database for the June CactusWorld.

3. Treasurer:

- a) Membership - Mr Kirkbright reported that membership to date for this year compared with the same period last year was: Full 1449 (-7), Senior 716 (+18), Junior 6 (+1), making a journal taking total of 2171 (+12), and Associates 215 (-8). Adjusting for the 73 Full members who renewed as Senior members this year, the Full member total would have been 1552 (+66) and Seniors 643 (-55). Bradleya subscriptions were 455 (-11). He said that analysis of the non-renewals by country showed that about 30 of these were from mainland Europe and it was agreed that these be mailed inviting their renewal and that a copy of the last journal also be included.
- b) Gift Aid – He had nothing to report on this.
- c) Interest Rates – From January to November 2008 COIF yielded an average of 5.5% on our deposits, in December this fell to 4.0% and was currently 2.75%, still above many commercial rates. If this continued, he expected a £5,000 loss on our income from interest.
- d) Books – The *Ferocactus* book sales were steady and had a positive cash flow to date of £3,509, whilst the *Ariocarpus* book sales also had a positive cash flow of £122, less any minor postage costs. The *Echeveria* book sales, whilst good in the last quarter, had started slowly this quarter (£865) and were currently £10,000 below break even point.
- e) National Convention 2010 – He expressed concern that the cost estimates for this were rather optimistic in view of the substantial fall in exchange rates and predicted a possible loss of up to £1,500 for the event. However the Convention Committee felt that an increase in price would have a detrimental effect on potential attendance.

4. Shows Committee:

- a) Advertising – Ian Thwaites would be organising and submitting quarterly information on Shows Committee events for CactusWorld, subject to space availability.
- b) National Show – Mr Tibbetts reported that there had been some slight criticism on the show report that appeared in the December journal and that perhaps an independent reporter should have been used to give a more overall view of this major 4 yearly Society event, including interviews with exhibitors, judges, nurseries and attendees. This was agreed but it was felt that this should be arranged by the Shows Committee. The CD of the show was in preparation by Dr Gillian Evison. A preliminary version had been seen and was judged to be to a high standard. It was planned to have 100 copies available at the AGM, with more possibly available later, costs to be £6 each (£7 overseas) including postage, 5 for £25 and 10% discount on these prices if collected at a major Society event.
- c) Judges Course – The next course was confirmed for 4th–6th September 2009 and a total take up of 29 to date was known, including committee and speakers, considerably better than last year. A decision on future courses would be made after it was known how successful this one was and after soliciting the opinion of those attending.
- d) Handbook of Shows – Proposals for a possible revision would be discussed at the Judges Course with the attendees, Messrs Betteley and Thwaites to lead the discussion.

5. Conservation Committee:

Dr Maddams in a written report detailed the following:-

Projects – The two related projects involving fencing of areas where the endangered *Euphorbia astrophora* and *Euphorbia brevirama* had been completed ahead of schedule and within budget. Martin Scott was clearly a very useful new contact with whom the committee hoped to work in the future. At the next meeting on 14th March the committee would consider in detail how to expand its ex-situ conservation activities.

6. **Research Committee:**

Alan Hill in a written report said that both Darrell Plowes and Barbara Goetsch had yet to submit an application. An initial funding enquiry from Jonathan Hutchinson had been received just prior to his expedition in Ethiopia with Addis Ababa University personnel. No detailed proposal was submitted due to lack of time and adequate funding from other sources, but he was to make our existence known to the university and stress that our remit was not general funding of a university department but possible funding of what was considered appropriate specific research into succulent plants. He was to provide a contact name at the university.

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

- a) Advertising – Mr Quail reported that the 1st quarter advertising income was £769, virtually unchanged from March 2008. We had also gained a new series of 4 advertiser. He was still to find somebody to take on seeking new journal advertisers. He had sent advertising rates to the postal literature companies (*minute 08/43/2*) without response to date.
- b) Journal Production – He said that the December journal colour was almost perfect and that the printers had been complimented. The planned ‘to printer’ date of 16th February for the next journal was on course, although there were still some elements requiring finalisation, with a planned mailing date of 11th March. There had been some additional work for the team this quarter, i.e. the National Show CD cover and label design, adverts for the CD and Bradleya in CactusWorld and for Bradleya in the C.S.S.A. journal, completing the B.C.S.S. Futures insert, plus the additional 16 pages for the March journal. The prospective editorial team member had been allocated a live article and produced an initial version after some training and support. Following additional test print trials, one of the printing firms identified as a possible reserve journal printer seemed worthy of serious consideration,. It already undertook a lot of similar print runs for other specialist organisations and had confirmed their previous very competitive prices. There were some further investigations to be concluded before a decision was made at which point he would prefer Mr Kirkbright to also become involved in the process.

8. **Bradleya Editor:**

Dr Walker, in a written report, said work on Bradleya 27 was progressing well with 5 articles edited and others in various stages of the production process. There were still some promised articles to be received but the cover design and the advertisements for the March/April issue of the C.S.S.A journal and the March CactusWorld were complete thanks to Mr Quail. He gave details of the 5 Darwin themed articles received and their progress, 3 other non-themed articles received and their progress plus four other themed articles promised but yet to be received.

9. **Journal Editor:**

Mr Mottram reported that reaction to the December journal had been extremely good from a wide range of the membership and felt that perhaps future December journals should be lighter in mood. One side effect of having a more attractive journal was that authors were encouraged to submit more and more articles; he currently had more than sufficient to fill the June and September issues and now had to tell authors that there would be a delay unless they were time sensitive. He saw this continuing for the future and this raised problems, as the ultimate size of the journal was limited by the editorial team’s processing capacity and cost ceilings. He had no immediate solution to this and said that refusal of articles would create a bad impression and force him to decide which articles had the most merit, a process both arbitrary and subject to mistake. One way of using this surplus was to increase the size of the journal and it had been agreed to add a further 16 pages to the next issue to absorb some of this material. He gave a list of articles received to date, their state of progress and planned publication. The March journal was on track and to its usual high standard, thanks to Mr Quail and the editorial team. He said that Mr McDonough had agreed to continue his role as the judge of the Photographic Competition but that Mr Tribble wished to pass his organising role to somebody else, but had promised to help find a replacement. He also said that he would be speaking at the 3 day International Congress on Cactus Conservation in Prague in June. This would be advertised in the March journal and he would act as the B.C.S.S. representative and report back to the Conservation Committee and also write a summary for the journal. It was agreed that he be provided with membership forms and sample journals to take to the event.

10. **Publications/Internet Officer:**

- a) Internet – Dr Mace reported that the server continued to provide a stable platform for the various uses made of it and that various upgrades to the system and software had been made without these being noticed, which was how it should be. There was still much unused server capacity so that coping with increased usage/new features should not be a problem. In view of the increasing problem of lost emails, he was planning to set up a web email site which should overcome this and also provide an archiving source for important emails. He said that the number renewing via the internet had increased considerably this year and that the biggest deficiency in our on-line presence was the outdated branch programmes and web pages, despite his efforts to remedy this.
- b) Publications – Dr Mace reported that sales of these continued to be healthy, particularly the *Echeveria* book, despite the current economic climate. He felt that the decline of the pound and hence the relative cost of our publications had helped in this. They were now using a new book consolidator for mailing out books. As the existing publication store would not now be moving, he wished to replace some of the existing wooden racking with metal units and also improve the roof weatherproofing before next winter. Estimates would be obtained.

11. **Forum**

Mr Hildyard reported that 30 new members had been signed up for this, making a total of some 764 members, 433 of which were active and posting. A third moderator was still to be appointed.

09/07 **TRUSTEE STATUS & RULES**

There was discussion regarding the status of Trustees following the new Charities Act and its immediate effect upon the Society constitution. A full statement would be made to the Executive Meeting/A.G.M. on April 4th.

09/08 **UPDATE ON THE SOCIETY FUTURE WORKING TEAM**

Dr Tebbenham reported on progress to date. These included:-

1. **Completed Projects**

These were the Branch Survey Results summary (apart from the supplementary questionnaire), the Advertiser Relationships (*see minute 09/09*), the Marketing Strategy Proposal (circulated to all F.& G.P.C. members), and B.C.S.S. Organisation and Management (circulated to all F.& G.P.C. members).

2. **Other Project Progress and Current Position**

- a) **Volunteers** – 6 volunteers now available to assist with the digital technology projects.
- b) **B.C.S.S. Marketing/Promotion requirement** – this could only be progressed when the question of how to address this and means of progressing this (internal or external) had been found.
- c) **Digital Technology Exploitation** – This had two threads – digital presentations and an electronic journal library. He gave some initial terms of reference for both. For the former these identified how this should be progressed, including additional presentations and means for branches to use this technology. He had consulted with David Greenaway on transferring slide sets for this conversion process and anticipated a maximum budget of £500 to fund this. For the latter this would initially be for the N.C.S.S. and C.S.S.G.B. journals and a method of doing so was being prepared after consultation with Dr Chris Dean of Stoke branch and who was prepared to offer technical oversight
- d) **Promotional Material** – Mr Arnold was to report on progress and the essential elements to be included on the CD needed to be defined urgently (**J.A.**). It was hoped to demonstrate the CD at the April Executive Meeting.. The final version, in editable form would be archived on the B.C.S.S. server and the material issued to branches and zones on a CD.
- e) **Junior Website** – He demonstrated the type of material currently available on the Junior Website pages developed by the Northampton and Milton Keynes Webmaster and said that he had also downloaded the National Curriculum web pages as a reference for future development. He had also provided two CD's containing this material so that this could be taken forward once a suitable volunteer had been found. Dr Mace took one for evaluation.

3. **Outstanding Work**

Items still requiring further work were the review of the Supplementary Survey, detail planning of the Digital Technology Projects, completion of the project planning for the Promotional Materials CD and the Presentation Report for the April Executive Meeting. He also provided a reporting schedule for 2009.

Mr Arnold again thanked the team for all their hard work.

09/09 **ADVERTISER RELATIONS**

Mr Quail had prepared a comprehensive paper on this topic which dealt with the historical trends, which were our advertisers or could be, the effect of the internet and the effect of our reciprocal advertising on membership gains. It also suggested means of enhancing the current advertising package, looking for new advertisers, and a number of action points for the future. Mr Quail ran through the main points of the paper, saying the advertising peak was in 2000 which coincided with the membership peak and since then had declined at a faster rate than membership. The annual advertising income was roughly equivalent to an extra 16 pages in the journal, a worthwhile exercise. It had become apparent that some of our advertisers considered the journal market to be insufficient and hence not cost effective and many had web sites which were more effective, for at least 78% of our membership had internet access. The obvious solution was to increase membership to improve the market. However, there were several niche markets such as holidays/plant hunting trips which were worth pursuing. There was a need to seek out new advertising sources and a volunteer to do this was still to be found. There was little evidence that the reciprocal advertising had a significant effect on recruitment. He ended by asking that the committee let him have any comments (**ALL**).

09/10 **SOCIETY CONVENTION**

Mrs Mace reported that Jean-Marc Chalet would not now be invited as a speaker. The rough timetable would comprise a midday start on the Friday with 3 talks, 3 talks on the Saturday plus various workshops and 3 talks on the Sunday. The workshops would of a practical nature and were being organised by David Minnion. It would be emphasised to be a new look International Convention to appeal to possible European attendees. A deposit of £50 per person would be required and the booking form would be in the June journal. Pen portraits of the speakers would appear nearer the event.

09/11 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1. **Seed Distribution** – This year sales had gone very well and we had needed to ration quantities requested of certain species. This might have an effect on future special offers so we would need to buy more seeds in the future. Prices would have to rise next year and it was suggested and agreed that they all be one price, say 30p per packet.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 4.58pm.

NEXT MEETING: 9th May 2009 at the Holiday Inn, London Road, Newport Pagnell, MK16 0JA (just off junction 14 of M1). It would start at 11.30 a.m. and light refreshments would be served at 1.30/1.45 p.m.