

BRITISH CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting, held on Saturday 30th July 2016 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	CactusWorld Editor
	Mrs Alice Vanden Bon (AVB)	Technical Editor
	Mr Barry Tibbetts (BT)	Shows Committee
	Dr Tony Mace (TMa)	Publications Officer
	Mr Bill Hildyard (BH)	Forum & Website Administrator
	Mr John Arnold (JA)	Legal Advisor
	Mrs Suzanne Mace (SM)	Committee
	Dr Roland Tebbenham (RT)	Committee

AGREED VERSION

16/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Dr Alan Bromley

16/27 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 7TH MAY 2016

Mr Harris highlighted 3 very minor corrections and a corrected version was formally signed by Dr Glen.

16/28 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from these apart from those recipients of awards mentioned in them conveying their thanks.

16/29 ELECTRONIC DECISION MAKING

None had been made.

16/30 COMMUNICATIONS

1. Clashing of Events – Mr Darbon had written to the Board asking if an extension to the Future Events programme on our website could be arranged to avoid the clashing of dates arranged for future events by neighbouring branches. It was said that this facility already existed.
2. PayPal Notices – Mr Harris had been receiving a series of emails, in German, stating that the Society was owed £29, which he had known nothing about and had treated as a scam. He had forwarded a copy of these to Mr Kirkbright. He had then received another email, which he had got translated, stating that the money had been returned to the sender and that an alternative method of payment should be arranged. As it was thought that it might relate to a book sale, the emails were passed to Dr Mace.
3. Awards – None had been received for this quarter.

16/31 REPORTS OF OFFICERS

1. **Vice-Chairman:**

- a) Branches – Dr Gibbs said that Shrewsbury branch had requested closure and intended closing after their October meeting. This had almost happened some 3 years ago but a husband/wife team had agreed to take over the main roles between them. He had contacted them regarding the chances of this not happening, without success as nobody else in the branch was willing to take over, so he formally asked the Board's permission for the closure, which was given. He had asked, but was yet to hear how the remaining branch membership was to be redistributed among the surrounding branches. He said that the problems with Herne Bay appeared to have settled, following Mrs Mace's ministrations and that he had enjoyed the celebratory convention held to celebrate the Sheffield branch's 70th anniversary.

2. **Membership Secretary:**

Mr Morris stated that since May 2016 he had enrolled 87 new members, 5 of whom had also subscribed to Bradleya. This compared with 73 at this time last year. These comprised 60 Full, 19 Senior, 5 Associate and 3 Junior. Of these, 5 were from overseas (1 each from China, Denmark, Greece, New Zealand and Portugal). 6 persons had joined using the Welcome Pack reduced price offer (currently a total of 71). He had also reinstated 6 former members. He said that Peter Lewis had sent him this year's unsold seed and that he now had sufficient to provide free seed to new members for the remainder of this year. He had had discussions with David Quail regarding the front sheet of the Welcome Pack. Paragraph 2 dealt with information about branches and what U.K. members could expect from their local branch. For overseas members this was largely irrelevant and he wondered if this paragraph could be replaced with something more appropriate in packs sent out to them. Cost would be some £200 to provide this and was agreed by this committee. He also suggested that a contact email be included for visiting overseas members and it was agreed that this would be appropriate.

3. **Treasurer:**

- a) Membership – Mr Kirkbright said that current membership compared with last year was encouragingly good, being: Full 1,485 (+11), Senior 1034 (+19), Junior 26 (-3), which when added together, the Journal taking membership total was 2,545 (+27). Associate membership was 194 (-7) and 86 Full members had switched to Senior and 41 the other way. Bradleya takers were 520 (-9). He said that we had had a major problem with PayPal last week where they had totally blocked any

activity on our account until we had provided confirmation of business registration and proof of address (all less than 6 months old). This had eventually been sorted, but the account had been out of action for 4 days and he could not say if we had lost any members or sales during that time.

- b) Books – He said that there had been little improvement in the sales of the **Baja** book.
- c) National Show – All traders had now paid and he had sent out a general notice by B.C.S.S.–Announce reminding branches of their legal duty to return their raffle tickets and reminding them that they should all be back by August 6th.

4. **Shows Committee:**

2016 National Show – Mr Tibbetts reported that the last meeting of the Shows Committee had again concentrated on the National Show. The meeting at Wood Green on 10th May, to discuss final details of the event, had resolved all outstanding issues. There had been doubt about the availability of the catering facilities which were to be refurbished, but Mr Harris had spoken to them recently and been informed that these would now be available. A table for 8 had been reserved for lunch for our patrons, our President, Chairman and partners. The item on the sale and showing of 'illegal' plants had now been resolved in that Mr Tibbetts had drafted a new statement which had been approved by the Board and the Shows Committee and would be displayed prominently at the show, had been put on the website and a copy sent to all traders. He said that to the best of the committee's knowledge all issues had now been resolved and the event should be as successful as the two previous shows at this venue.

5. **Conservation and Research Committees:**

- a) Conservation Committee – Alan Hill in a written report said that the article on the Pichidangui, Chile signs had been published in CactusWorld and that a copy of the Paul Klaassen Chilean expedition blog and CD had been sent to the committee. An article for CactusWorld about this expedition was being prepared by Pablo Weisser, whose presence on the expedition was funded by the Society. The committee had been in contact with the CactusWorld editor to ensure that any article submitted for publication was initially reviewed by it to ensure that as much information as possible was given about the conservation aspect. A request for financial support by an Oxford student to survey cacti in Porto Rico was considered by the committee, but rejected on the grounds that it was not a conservation project. It was then considered as a possible recipient for the Bill Maddams Travel Award, but unfortunately did not come within the guidance parameters of the scheme and was therefore passed on to the Research Committee. Macclesfield and East Cheshire B.C.S.S. branch were including the theme of B.C.S.S. conservation in their Tatton Show display. Direct conversation and emails were used to pass on information about past and present activities and suggested sources of other printed information. Documents left by Dr Maddams had been examined, but there were no traces concerning the article on ex-situ conservation that he had planned to publish.
- b) Research Committee – He said that members of the Board were aware that the committee agreed to partially fund, with £2,000, a 3 year research project by Constance Tremlett on 'Pollination Biology of *Stenocereus queretarensis* and the importance of bat pollination services' and that the initial work revealed queries about sterility in the species. This led to a request for further money to extend the research and the Board therefore sanctioned a further grant of £1,856.50 for which she had sent her thanks. The Oxford student's request, mentioned previously, had been considered by the committee, but rejected on the grounds that it was considered to lack depth of preparation, with no links to local knowledge or assurance that there would be a worthwhile outcome. The Research Committee members had begun a discussion on how to be pro-active about a remark in an article that was to appear in CactusWorld that 'In none of the plants with cephalia or pseudocephalia had the biology of shoot apices been studied in detail, and that this was an area that deserved the attention of some young scientists'. The intention was to decide how best to encourage this to happen.

6. **Advertising Officer:**

- a) Advertising – Mr Quail's written report said that the 3rd quarter advertising income was £197 (£278 last year) the drop being due to very few occasional advertisers and two more nurseries that advertised regularly closing down.
- b) CactusWorld Production Trainees – He said that the recently mentioned interested member had been supplied with Quark and given initial training materials and would be able to start training more intensively in the autumn after retiring.

7. **Bradleya Editor:**

Mr Charles in a written report said that the current situation regarding articles was a cause for concern. He had just 6 papers either accepted or out for review with one more promised. He had written to potential authors, but there appeared to be limited potential for further material. His aim was to complete the print files before the end of September as he planned to spend most of October in Peru. However, it was likely that there would not be enough to fill the issue by then (he currently had material for 36 pages) and would appreciate guidance on what to do about this situation. The recent sad death of one of our regular contributors, Heidi Hartmann, had not helped. There was discussion on this by the Board and it was said that it should be published by the end of the year, if possible, even if it was smaller in size. Mr Laius would review what articles he had to see if there were any suitable for inclusion in Bradleya rather than CactusWorld.

8. **Journal Editor:**

Mr Laius reported that there were currently 15 articles which were ready, 1 was with the production team awaiting design and layout and 6 were work in progress, so there were therefore sufficient articles for the next 2 to 3 issues, particularly as the National Show would take up a sizeable number of pages in the December issue. The September journal was on schedule and would contain a balanced selection of cacti, other succulents, cultivation and other general interest articles. He said that with regard to making Bradleya available on BioOne, there had been a slight setback in that the BioOne team, although eager to add Bradleya to their list, were unable to do so for at least a year (say January 2018). He had communicated this to Mr Charles and they had agreed to do this. He would therefore sign the new electronic agreement. If in the meantime JSTOR contacted him to say that they were ready to accommodate us, then we would sign up with them, but would reserve the right to be on the BioOne platform as well. Bradleya was already on the Web of Science. He said that he was still to visit the Journals Library, but that this was on his list of things to do.

9. **Technical Editor:**

Mrs Vanden Bon reported that the September journal had now being compiled and would have an extra 16 pages in an attempt to clear some of the backlog of articles. There would be just 1 insert only; an advert/order form for the 2017 Calendar currently being prepared by David Quail. This quarter's printer would be Warners.

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

a) **Publications** – Dr Mace reported that sales of these had been very slow apart from a brief flurry when the £ dropped in value, but this was not sustained. We had also had to include Pakistan along with China as countries that we would not sell items to because of apparent losses of items sent. He said that they were considering a few ideas which might give sales a bit of a boost and provide additional incentives for joining the B.C.S.S.:-

1. It had been decided that the selling of the current year's journals to anyone the year after they were published was premature, as it made it possible for a new member to buy the December journal a bare month after it was published. We therefore won't sell these journals until the following year. This was being implemented.

2. He was considering offering a set of the previous year's journals free to new members if they want them. This would involve a small increase in the journal print run.

3. To try to increase first year membership renewals he was considering offering a discount voucher redeemable against certain of our publications on the first membership renewal. There was some reluctance among certain Board members as it was felt that this was unfair on long term members, who could be considered more loyal.

b) **Website/Internet/Forum** – Dr Mace said there had been no responses for assistance in server management and the advert. was to be repeated in the September journal. Consequently there was no cover for himself. The completion of transfer of non-B.C.S.S. sites to a FastHosts server was proving more complex and slower than he had hoped. Consequently he had very reluctantly had to retain the Hostgator server for another month. There were 9 accounts remaining on the Hostgator server and he hoped that another 2 weeks should see this project complete. He said that because of his total involvement in the server work plus Mr Hildyard's recent internet access problems, there had been no progress on the website work. He still could not access the Joomis management system, meaning Mr Hildyard was the only one who could do this, thus leaving us in a very vulnerable state. Email systems had been highly problematic over the last month with many bounces and other errors, some of which could be put down to recent B.T. failures. There had also been recent problems with the B.C.S.S. PayPal system (*see also minute 16/31/3(a)*).

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

Dr Tebbenham said that David Lambie had agreed to take over as Project Leader and hoped he would meet up with him and Dr Gibbs at the Birmingham Show, when he would pass over the equipment Mr Lambie would need to continue the job and also bring him up to speed with the processes. He also summarised the current position with the digital programmes. Mr Lambie would also need access to the server and for the Norton Security annual renewal to be reassigned from Dr Tebbenham's personal credit card account. It had also been suggested that rather than supplying programmes on CD's we should use DropBox as the means of transfer, which was worth considering.

12. **2018 Convention:**

Mr Arnold gave details of the final list of speakers which included John Ellis, Aymeric de Barmon, Joël Lodé, Adam Harrower and Ricarda Riina. He gave a brief breakdown of the envisaged programme and had decided to reduce the number of short talks. It was also decided that the after dinner auction, which was normally run, would probably not now take place, but that maybe two decent raffles would be held instead. This would be thought about.

16/32 **WEBSITE**

There was a brief discussion on this and the problems we had, especially the fact that no volunteer help for Dr Mace had materialised to date, resulting in a very large increase in his workload and leaving the Society very vulnerable. It was agreed that in view of these, perhaps we should start again. Mr Hildyard in conjunction with Dr Mace would compile a specification of what was required on the website, so that we could put this work out to quote and members of this committee would also talk to people they knew who might be able to help (**BH/TMa/DK**).

16/33 **BRANCH INNOVATION AWARD**

No submissions for this had been received to date. A reminder would appear in the next journal.

16/34 **ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION OF THE SOCIETY**

Dr Bromley had submitted two reports on this. The first summarised his work based on the four responsibilities assigned to the role of Marketing Officer. Regarding the Society's marketing strategy, he felt that this process could be split into Marketing, Social Media and Press/Media relations. With regard to Social Media, he had revived the Society's Twitter account to promote branch/zone shows and the National Show to great effect and showed the Twitter analytics which indicated an increase in followers and overall 'noise' in the Twitter community regarding the B.C.S.S. He had also contributed to the Society's Group Facebook page, particularly with regard to shows, **but was unsure this was helpful. Mr Hildyard said that because the person originally responsible for the Society Twitter site had now ceased to add anything, he had had to take this over.** However Dr Bromley felt that a Social Media Co-ordinator should be appointed to handle this with a small group as it was very time consuming to use Social Media properly. He also suggested that branches use the free MailChimp to promote their activities. With regard to press/media relations, Dr Bromley said that we had an experienced person in this press/media sphere in Ian Thwaites, who was currently promoting the National Show and suggested that he might be the best person for the position of Media/P.R. Officer, but it was thought by this committee that the latter might well be too busy with his own private work to take this on. Dr Bromley thought that we should be broadening our use of both of these avenues.

In the second part of his report Dr Bromley looked at the four Marketing Officer roles assigned in the 'job description' created by the Board and asked it to reconsider these in the light of what he felt was significant negativity and lack of support (including financial) for what he felt the role should achieve. These were as follows:-

1. Marketing Strategy – The original role was to "Develop a national strategy for the Society, including researching and incorporating effective methods used by other societies, working with media schools, libraries, plant societies and other communication channels" and asked did the Board view marketing and promotion as being beneficial to the future success of the B.C.S.S. The Board unanimously said yes, it was essential.

He asked further questions under this topic, namely:-

- a) What kinds of marketing activities did the Board envisage as being appropriate?
- b) What were intended goals of such marketing activities?
- c) Was the Board willing to invest money in this? If so:-
 - i) Must there be a clearly measureable return on investment?
 - ii) How would this be assessed?

2. Membership Benefits – The original role was to "Research the needs of the current membership, developing a package of membership benefits to address those needs and ensuring that these were available to all members".

Three questions were asked under this topic, namely:-

- a) How did the Board plan to make membership more attractive when so much information, including online journals, was available for free on the internet?
- b) Would researching the needs of the current membership identify anything that was likely to prove acceptable to the Board?
- c) Was this really the Marketing Officer's role or should membership benefits, now and in the future, be more appropriate for the Membership Secretary?

3. Zones and Branches – The original role was to "Work with and assisting Zone and Branch Officials to ensure maximum benefit from all public events such as shows and displays, including stand design and National/Local promotion of events."

The questions asked were:-

- a) Did the Board view the Zone and Branches as being important to the long-term viability of the B.C.S.S. and if so what could be done to support them better?
- b) Should each branch be encouraged to hold at least one event of some kind each year, even if only a 'display and sales'? If so:-
 - i) What role could the Shows Committee play in providing advice, ideas and support?
 - ii) Would the Board consider providing funding for such events, particularly if they helped fulfil the educational aims of the Society?
- c) Could the A.G.M. provide an opportunity to forge closer links with the zones and branches?

4. Marketing Materials – The original role was to "Review all promotional materials and co-ordinating a programme to develop and deliver appropriate materials in a recognised/agreed house style.

The three questions asked this time were:-

- a) What 'promotional materials' was the Board referring to – National, Zone, Branch or all these?
- b) How did the Board envisage the process for developing a house style for promotional materials?
- c) Given that style is largely a matter of taste, was this likely to gain broad agreement?

During initial discussion on these topics it was said that Mr Bromley's experience of the Society had been at his local branch and since taking on the position he had been on a very steep learning curve, as not all branches worked the same way. It was said that he had made many useful suggestions and that we felt that he should continue in the position, as to lose him now would be great loss to the Society. Discussion then took place on the points that he had made and numbered above.

Item 1 - There was general agreement that the principle was sound and that we should develop the process as there was evidence that it worked and in time could significantly help double our annual new membership (up to 500/year) . However it did depend on somebody within the branch/zone undertaking the work involved, which might be a problem. We needed to make branches aware of the ways they could promote themselves to the public via public displays and shows at local and national events and also provide many of the plant nurseries with Society membership and information leaflets.

In response to the questions posed under this item, it was felt that the branch/Society leaflet idea had been useful and many branches were using it to some degree and that Society funding for this would be essential as many branches were not able to do so. However distributing them on a branch wide basis would not be economic, as many branches still remained insular, but perhaps an individual letter to branch secretaries might be more effective, or perhaps a picture of our banners in use should appear in the journal with an appeal for them to be used. It was suggested that a specific fund be set up to do so, as we seem to have a surfeit of money allocated for other aspects of our funding. It was suggested a figure of about £3,000 be used to publicise the Society within the current branch confines.

Item 2 - It was suggested that we emphasised our support of conservation and make more use of electronic communication to attract membership. We should also promote the diversity of our plants. It was also said that only some 140 members were currently on B.C.S.S.–Announce. We needed to get more new members to stay with us longer, although Dr Mace had suggested a possible answer to this (*see minute 16/31/10(a)/3*), but this had not been supported by some Board members. They also needed to attend branch meetings if possible and we needed to encourage branch members to make their new members welcome and feel valued. It was felt that researching the needs of new members was not appropriate or would prove useful at present or that tasks identified under this topic were within the province of our Membership Secretary.

Item 3 - The main problem was that we did not know what shows or displays our branches undertook and that quite often branch and zone shows were not run as public events. One source of this information was that gathered by Mr Darbon via applications for show stationery for such events and it was suggested that he send a list of these to Dr Mace so that a database of events could be compiled. It was also said that events run as public ones required more helper support, a problem for some branches. It was also said that although branches should be encouraged to hold at least one such event, they would struggle and it might be more viable on a zonal basis and that help/advice would be available from the Show Committee. Even then,

financial help would be welcome and although there was a scheme already in existence, it was suggested that application for this should be made more easy. Mr Harris always sent any information of other commercially organised shows to the local Society branch and it was suggested that he also send it to Dr Bromley. It was said that including this sort of information in the Secretary's Pack would dilute its usefulness, but there was a section within it that detailed what secretaries were expected to do. It was said that rather than try to forge links with Zones and branches at the A.G.M. it would be more useful if this were done via the Zone Reps meeting and that Dr Bromley be invited to attend the next one on October 2nd at Birmingham.

Item 4 - It was generally felt that we had developed a reasonable 'house style' both at National, Zone and Branch level (see report previously circulated by Mr Arnold and Dr Tebbenham) and that branches should be encouraged to use these features (typeface, approved logo/badge, charity number text, etc). However, it was envisaged that branches might well be unable to afford the colour printing costs, but should be encouraged to incorporate/adapt them where necessary to suit their local needs. Currently we had the various branch/zone leaflet ideas developed by Dr Bromley, the banners, tabards and cultivation leaflet packs, whilst some branches produce branch/zone programme cards, their own cultivation leaflets, bookmarks, etc. In view of this, it was felt that branches should be encouraged to continue to produce these. It was also suggested that rather than sell the Society car sticker, we give one to each U.K. member.

16/35 **SOCIETY A.G.M.**

As a result of the survey it was said that we needed to attract more plant sales and have good speakers talking for about an hour each. We had already booked an excellent overseas one and it was suggested that we try to get another from say R.H.S. Wisley speaking on pot plant cultivation. It was said that the only part of the A.G.M. business that was legally necessary was the presentation of the accounts and the election of officers and that most of the reports could be made much shorter. It was also said that perhaps we should hold the A.G.M. in the late morning and have the two talks in the afternoon. Mr Morris said that he had arranged for the use of the digital projector and instruction on its use. In order to spark interest in attending it was agreed that we should publicise the event and the change of running order, well in advance of the event. *Post meeting communication suggested that perhaps those needing to make reports submit these in writing (say a maximum of 400 words) and these could then be included with the A.G.M. notice so that members could read them in advance and that time be allowed in the A.G.M. for members to ask questions on any aspect they did not understand.*

At the end of the discussion, the draw was made for the 3 winners from those who had contributed to the A.G.M. survey. These were Messrs G. Bulmer, I. Robinson and K. Dobbs.

16/36 **DISCUSSION ON THE SEED PURCHASING OFFICER POST**

Mr Harris said that when he had contacted Mr Rushforth about whether he would continue in the post for next year, he had said that he would, but that we should find a replacement fairly quickly as he was not getting any younger. To date we had had no response to our appeal for a replacement for the post and it was suggested that perhaps we needed to split the job up into its various aspects, such as purchasing, counting and packeting and then producing the list for the journal. This committee had no ideas on who might be approached. There were a few suggested names put forward but many of these were not interested when approached. The post would be advertised again in the September journal and it was suggested that Mr Rushforth be approached for any suggestions for his replacement (**DK**) and other suggested members be asked again or asked if they had any suggestions for a replacement person (**SM/AL**).

16/37 **FUTURE PUBLICATIONS**

Mrs Vanden Bon said that a rough draft should be available of the G.D.R. book in a couple of months for Gordon to get peer-reviewed and she hoped to have the book available for printing in the autumn. There were still some photographs needing replacing/inclusion and Dr Tebbenham said that he used Visio which would produce better images of the line drawings/illustrations and was willing to process any that Mrs Vanden Bon passed to him. He also suggested a source of the pictures required. She said that she had enquired about a smaller print run, say 500, but due to print sheet storage problems at the printers the overall cost would be similar for any reprint. She was asked to establish the costs for a 500 and 1,000 print run to see what saving there might be. Dr Mace said that he had sufficient room for at least 2 pallets of the book. Mr Hildyard was in the final stages of compiling the 2017 calendar and hoped to have it ready for sending to the printer by the end of next week.

16/38 **REAPPOINTMENT OF ANCILLARY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES**

All were willing to continue and were reappointed for another year. It was suggested that the position of Electronic Media Librarian be taken off the list, as it was felt that this could be a website download facility and did not need to appear. It was suggested that because the list appeared with the June journal, in future years the list be reviewed at our February meeting to ensure consistency.

16/39 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Dates for 2017 Meetings – These were arranged for February 4th, May 13th, July 29th, and December 2nd.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 5.05pm.

NEXT MEETING: 3rd December 2016 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 1 to 1.30 p.m.