

# BRITISH CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting, held on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2018 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 Barry Tibbetts (BT)	Shows Committee Representative
	Mrs Alice Vanden Bon (AVB)	Technical Editor
	Dr Tony Mace (TMA)	Publications Officer
	Mr Bill Hildyard (BH)	Forum & Website Administrator
	Mr John Arnold (JA)	Legal Advisor
	Dr Alan Bromley (AB)	Marketing Officer
	Mrs Suzanne Mace (SM)	Committee
	Dr Hazel Taylor (HT)	Committee

## AGREED VERSION

### 18/01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr Al Laius.

### 18/02 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER 2017

As there were no further corrections since our last meeting, an agreed copy of the minutes was formally signed by Dr Glen.

### 18/03 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

17/51 Zone Amalgamation – It had been asked after the December minutes had been distributed that a part of this section be deleted, but it had been pointed out that the distributed minutes were an accurate record of the December meeting and this could not be done. The section related to the phrase 'mystery of what had happened to the Zone 14 funds in the past' and it was stated that the 'mystery' was one that only applied to this committee. Mr Kirkbright had now been in touch with the current Secretary of the Zone 14 Committee who had said that back in 2009, Dr Glen and Mr Kirkbright had agreed that the Zone funds be distributed among the Zone's branches, but Mr Kirkbright had yet to receive any copies of the Zone funds and the secretary had also said that it was difficult to establish what level of funds were involved, due to the then treasurer having died recently. However, it had now been learnt that Zone 14 was actively investigating the situation and hoped to have an answer in due course. It was also said that the proposed amalgamation of Zones 12 and 14 would not now take place.

### 18/04 COMMUNICATIONS

1. Al Laius – He had emailed this committee stating that he was resigning as a Society Trustee, effective 14th January 2018, although he would continue to attend these meetings and produce the CactusWorld.
2. Jarad Marguiles – Mr Harris had had emails from Peter Cowdell about this person, who was from Ohio and was studying for 3 years at Sheffield University and working on the Conservation of Cacti. He had joined the Sheffield branch and wished to contact various members of the Society and other people to learn more about conservation. Mr Arnold had indeed met him when he spoke at Sheffield branch and he would email Mr Marguiles to ask if he was interested in coming to our Convention as he felt that Mr Marguiles would learn a lot if he came to it.
3. Awards – An R.H.M.A. was agreed.

### 18/05 REPORTS OF OFFICERS

#### 1. Vice-Chairman:

- a) Bridlington Branch – It had been learned that the branch had decided that it could no longer continue as a separate entity and wished to merge with the nearby Hull Branch. The combined branch name would change to 'Hull and East Riding'. Mr Kirkbright said that he was still to receive Bridlington branch's accounts and monies which he would then pass on to the combined branch. Dr Gibbs would remind them of this. The merger was agreed by this committee.
- b) Speakers' List – Dr Gibbs had emailed all speakers on the current list asking for updates to their talks and contact details. He had also included a form stating that their address details would be reduced to the city/town and the first part of the postcode as agreed at our December meeting and asking for their permission to do so to comply with the new G.D.P. Regulations. He said it also needed to be done for the Branches/Officials list and other Society publications. He also thanked Dr Taylor and Mr Arnold for their assistance with the speakers' list.

#### 2. Membership Secretary:

Mr Morris stated that since the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017 he had enrolled 122 new members, 21 of whom had also subscribed to Bradleya. This compared with 66 at this time last year. These comprised 76 Full, 23 Senior, 14 Associate and 9 Junior. Of these 12 were from overseas (2 each from Canada and Spain and 1 each from Australia, Belgium, China, France, Gibraltar, Italy, Netherlands and the U.S.A). 4 persons had joined using the Welcome Pack reduced price offer (currently a total of 111). He had also reinstated 4 former members. He said that to enrol so many members in such a short period was remarkable, certainly the highest number in his term of office. 45 branches had received new members; the highest total was 7 for each of Norwich and South Wales and then 5 each for Birmingham, Manchester and Reading. He said that the first two weeks of January alone produced 43 new members and this combined with higher than normal renewal activity had meant a

very busy period for him. He had also received the usual crop of unsigned, undated and almost illegible cheques, which he had now resolved. He said that David Rushforth had now supplied him with a fresh batch of seeds for distribution to new members in their Welcome Packs and that this should be sufficient until he received the unsold seeds from Peter Lewis (Seed Distributor). He said that on the Membership Database the merged Bridlington/Hull branches would be shortened to just Hull branch and asked to be told who the main officials of it were, so that he could update the database. He also said that when he sent the enrolled membership addresses to the printers in March last year there were 2100 members, compared with this year where we had already reached a membership of over 2000. Mr Kirkbright said that he would probably have to add an additional 100 more copies to the journal print list to avoid being short of journal copies.

3. **Treasurer:**

- a) **Membership** – Mr Kirkbright gave an updated current membership as at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018 compared with the same time as last year which was: Full 1,117 (+94), Senior 891 (+63), Junior 18 (+1), which when added together, the Journal taking membership total was 2,026 (+158). Associate membership was 168 (+15) and 91 Full members had switched to Senior and 40 the other way.
- b) **2018 Calendar** – This was showing a net loss of £288.
- c) **Gordon Rowley Publication** – Net sales after post and packing and card/Paypal charges were £5,605 which was 44% of our capital outlay.
- d) **WebSite Rebuild** (*see also minute 18/10*) – To date we had paid out £9,292 towards the redesign and build, which was just under one third of the estimated cost. Progress had not been as fast as we would have liked, but it was said that a lot of behind the scenes work had been done. He had now been invoiced for the second instalment and it was said that it was a fixed sum contract.
- e) **2018 Convention** – He said that so far 72 people (excluding speakers) had booked residence for this which was still very much below what he had hoped, being 45 below the 117 who had booked residence by the same time for 2014 and 55 below the 2014 final figure of 127. Non-residence bookings were 6 compared with 10 for the same time in 2014 and the final figure of 11 and the Saturday only bookings were 3 compared with the final figure of 18. Only 16 sales tables had been booked to date compared with 41 in February 2014 and a final figure of 44 by August 2014. He said that he would be reducing the number of rooms booked at the end of March to minimise penalties and anybody booking after then might be unable to book a room.

4. **Shows Committee:**

Mr Tibbetts said that he had nothing new to report as the next Shows Committee meeting was not until 25<sup>th</sup> February since the Shows Committee had reduced their meetings to 3 per year.

5. **Conservation Committee:**

Mr Hill reported that there was nothing new to report.

6. **Research Committee:**

Mr Hill reported that the grant of £1,000 outlined in his last report concerning Ignacio Soto for the project concerning the second survey and protection strategies in the National Reserve of Valle Fertil, Argentina had now been agreed between us and Mr Kirkbright had been requested to send the money.

7. **Journal Editor:**

Mr Laius in a written report said that there were 17 articles which were ready, of which 9 would go in the March 2018 issue. 2 articles were with the production team awaiting design and layout and 9 were currently work in progress. This meant that there were enough articles for the next 2 issues. The March journal was on schedule and would contain a well balanced mixture of 9 different articles with a bias towards cacti this time as well as Cactus Talk and Lit. Review. There had been a lot of extra work recently with the inserts such as the A.G.M agenda (which was more like a booklet these days, as it incorporated the Officer's reports), the annual index and more than the usual number of obituaries in the Newsletter section. The journal would be compiled by Mrs Vanden Bon this quarter and she had worked very hard to make sure that everything comes together. After the June issue there were no more contributions for 'In my Greenhouse' in hand, so if anybody would like to volunteer their own greenhouse or knew somebody who might be interested, then please let Mr Laius know.

He said that Bradleya was launched on the BioOne platform on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2018, and all submitted content was now available to applicable BioOne subscribers. Hopefully, Mr Charles could entice more authors to write for Bradleya now that it was available on this platform. He had also uploaded all the Bradleya files to the B.C.S.S. server for permanent archiving.

8. **Technical Editor:**

**Journal** – Mrs Vanden Bon said that the March journal would be the biggest we could produce with the current style of saddle stitching. The 96 pages would comprise 80 article pages, an 12 page newsletter and the 4 page cover. Inserts this quarter would be the A.G.M. agenda, the index for Volume 35 and the 2018 Calendar of Events. She said that everything was on schedule for the journal to be printed at the arranged date and then mailed out to members on time.

9. **Advertising Officer:**

- a) **Advertising** – Mr Quail's written report said that the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter advertising income was £515 (£457 last year), a pleasing upturn in revenue this quarter.
- b) **CactusWorld Production Trainees** – He said the training of the second trainee remained suspended due to family illness, whilst the third trainee had now started his training, after a planned delay resulting from Mr Quail's holiday and his work on the March 2018 journal, plus a prolonged breakdown in his computer, now resolved.

10. **Bradleya Editor:**

Mr Charles reported that ever since he took over its editor he had always wanted to produce and publish Bradleya in the first half of the year and that this year this might happen, as he hoped to have it published before the Convention. So far he had received 13 manuscripts and had promises of a further 5. Of these, 6 concerned cacti, including a major review of *Parodias*.

7 papers were already paginated making 57 pages to date. It was agreed that he was to be commended for all his hard work.

11. **Publications/Internet and Forum Officers:**

- a) **Publications** – Dr Mace reported he had still been busy on the publications front, having had quite a lot of orders for back journals, presumably from our new members. He said that the flood of new orders and renewals by PayPal payments had made it difficult to pick out publication orders from the flood. The summary page from PayPal didn't show what the payment was for, so we had to load each payment information sheet to find this out. PayPal's annoying habit of giving 'fatal error' when you tried to load this sheet meant that you sometimes had to try two or three times to check this information, which added to the time taken, not to speak of the frustration.
- b) **Internet/Website** – Dr Mace said that it had been a fairly quiet period since December. He said that quite a lot of password resets had been needed on branch sites; upgrades to the WHM software had made this process a bit more complicated than it used to be. The server anti-virus and anti-malware software had picked up a few infections which had now been quarantined. Unix servers used to be fairly immune to these problems, but were now sufficiently common to be worthy of the hackers' attentions. Branches running Wordpress and Joomla sites needed to be aware of the critical need to keep their software up to date, but could be set to do so automatically. One or two rare programming problems had been picked up and corrected in the sales and membership programming on the main B.C.S.S. site and he said that security certificates (for the https protocol) were now installed on all accounts on the server, saving the previous rather complex manual installation process.
- c) **Forum** – Mr Hildyard said that apart from an issue for some members who used Chrome as their browser having an issue staying logged in, which seemed to be tied in with Chrome update, there had not been much to report on the Forum, apart from one post of note on 28<sup>th</sup> January "A short but nice comment from Anne Swithinbank on Gardeners Question Time today. Asked about growing cacti from seed, she discussed the value of joining the Society and the opportunities this afforded for seed purchase, meeting other at local groups and reading interesting publications". He said that Forum members were a total of 4160 of which 922 were declared B.C.S.S. members.
- d) **Facebook Page** – Mr Hildyard said that now that he and Dr Bromley had unravelled the mysteries of Facebook pages and ownership and linking to Instagram, etc., we had seen a massive increase in page engagement due to the fact that Dr Bromley could now schedule posts to appear on Facebook as well as other platforms. Statistics were: Likes – 5989 Post engagements; up 324% in the last week, Reach up 130% in the last week. He reported that the Facebook group continued to grow at a steady pace at about 18% a month. Members' posts were 3,969, with comment and reactions >7,700. He said that it looked good but he believed we could do better.

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

No report received from David Lambie, so no update could be reported. However, the Roger Mackie *Asclepiad* slides had been delivered to Dr Gibbs for digitising.

13. **2018 Convention:**

Mr Arnold reported that he had agreed the March journal advert. with David Quail and Al Laius was also putting an appeal for assistance and raffle donations, including plants, in the March Newsletter section of the journal, following the format established for the 2014 convention for the lead-up journal information, although this would be slightly different to that in the December journal. Dr Bromley had put in some excellent publicity in the e-newsletter, for which he was most grateful and Mr Laius had continued to plug it. He was also grateful for the substantial mentions in both the *Mammillaria* Society and M.S.G. journals. As mentioned in Mr Kirkbright's report, current numbers of attendees were still disappointing, but he hoped that these efforts would improve them. He also said that all the speakers had now contacted him in response to his email and all had approved the programme and were happy with it, as had the session leaders with the exception of Dr Colin Walker, whom he was still to contact. He also needed to know if he had booked for the event. We would probably need assistance with collecting some of the speakers from airports once final information was known. He said that his continuing struggle was in choosing the proposed 'goody bag'. At this point, several suggestions were made of specific sources of this item and others by other members of this committee, which he would now investigate. He said that Mr and Mrs Minors had indicated that they could no longer help with the event. Mrs Vanden Bon would prepare the files and check if Peter Arthurs was willing to print the colour page and supply the machine to punch the holes for binding. Alternatively Mr Arnold would ask Graham Charles if he could print and bind the programme booklet (AVB).

14. **Marketing Officer:**

- a) Dr Bromley's report again included a survey of the activities currently on the Social Media scene. He said that the Instagram following had increased from 1,400 in December to over 2,570 currently. As he was able to, he had set up a B.C.S.S. Pinterest business account which was an online pin board, which allowed people to find items they were interested in under various categories, but was a useful outlet for the photographs he was posting on other Social media platforms. He would also investigate the cost of advertising on social media which he thought would be of benefit to us. He also asked if he could be given the email addresses of recent new members, so that he could ascertain how they came to hear of the B.C.S.S. He also needed the addresses for all new U.K. and European members, otherwise he could not send them the monthly e-newsletter. He and Dr Taylor had had preliminary discussions about creating some short videos and setting up a YouTube channel. They had had some thoughts on this and he had had experience of this in his previous work life.
- b) **R.H.S. Wisley Event** – He had now settled on Saturday 7th April for a second event in the Plant Centre at Wisley and was having a meeting there on 5th February with Vanessa Penn and the appointed contact person. The R.H.S. had promised to do more to advertise the event within the gardens this time. He thought that the seed raising kit would be worth another go and he proposed to use the same display boards as before. However, he was currently seeking a couple of children-friendly volunteers to help with this event.
- c) **Seed Raising Kits for Children** – He had received a number of responses which brought the current total requested kits to 420. Craig Barber had kindly offered to supply the seed, branches would provide the compost and he would pack this and the kit components and post these to the branches as required. He suggested that we should increase the total number of kits to 1,000

the cost of which plus postage the Society would pay for (the estimated kit cost would be £348.78 making a kit cost of £0.35p. This was agreed and it was suggested that to save postage they be available for collection at the A.G.M..

- d) Botanical Gardens Directory/Displays – He said that the Directory of Botanical Gardens was about to undergo proof reading and would be posted on our website in early March. He would also like some 2 page flyers printed, including a QR code, for distribution at B.C.S.S. shows and events. A B.C.S.S. poster at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh, was still under consideration and would be discussed with Gunnar Ovstebo, their Senior Horticulturalist shortly and he would approach other botanical gardens when the directory was ready and that this would be a reason to get in touch.
- e) Membership Needs and Benefits – He then detailed other items he was involved with under this heading and gave the current situation for each. These involved Display Boards and the Wisley Plant Society Show (Shows Committee), branch leaflets (various branches) and promotional ideas in the acceptable house style. He would like to add something about the latter to the Secretary's Pack, when available.

18/06 **2018 SOCIETY A.G.M.**

Mr Harris said that he had arranged the expanded agenda for this and that there was only one nominee for each of the main positions and only 2 nominees for the annual Trustee positions, so no elections would be necessary. The exception to this would be the election for the Shows Committee positions, for although there was only two nominees for the 2 vacant positions, one position was for 3 years before re-election whilst the other was for 2 years before re-election. He therefore proposed to have a secret ballot for the two newcomers to this committee, the winner of which would take the 3 year position and the other the 2 year one. Both speakers were confirmed, a representative of the Sheffield branch to accept the Innovation Award would be attending and 3 sales tables had been booked to date. Mr Morris would also check on the viability of the projection equipment. It was also hoped that Mr Hill would be able to attend.

18/07 **MANAGEMENT OF OUR MONETARY RESERVES TO APPROPRIATE LEVELS**

Dr Taylor had produced a paper on this which said that the Society currently held 4½ years' average annual expenditure in reserves and suggested a number of ways in which this could be reduced over time to a lower level. Dr Glen asked if there were any questions arising from this. Dr Gibbs said that the paper had suggested that we would need to reduce this within 12 months and he wondered if we should concentrate on say a 5 year plan. Mr Kirkbright said that these reserves were in fact cash balances and his policy had always been since he had become treasurer was that at any September he should have sufficient monies to fund the running of the Society for a further year and if we needed to wind up the Society which was some £130,000. Dr Taylor said that she did not intend to suggest that we do what Dr Gibbs had suggested, but that we needed to have a justification for our current additional funds, representing 3 years' annual expenditure above the £130,000 and a planned approach (say over 3 years) to reduce our published monetary excess over and above what Mr Kirkbright had advised that we needed to run the Society. It was suggested that perhaps some of the money could be used to supplement the setting up of the intended Gordon Rowley library, of which our library would become part, and various means of doing so were suggested. As part of this process an urgent initial approach should be made to the Trustees of the project to establish how this could be done and also to establish if the books were insured. It was asked how much the use of commercial mass storage units would cost and Mr Tibbetts said he would find out as his son was now a director at such a unit (BT). It was asked if contact had been made with Brendan Burke, our book librarian, and Mr Harris had emailed Roger Ferryman, who on his return to this country, would contact Mr Burke and tell him that we were trying to contact him and hopefully we would discover the current status of our book library. It was also said that there would be an article in the March Journal asking members to suggest projects that that could be financially supported and such suggestions be forwarded to Mr Harris so that they could be assessed by this committee (EH). It was also agreed that we should also let the members know that as we were proposing to spend significant amounts of money, we would like to invite their comments on our ideas and add their own thoughts as to how to do so for the best benefit to the Society and its members via the journal (HT). It was suggested that another way would be to pay our speakers their true expenses, if they wished. There were other suggestions as to what additions we should consider and include to improve our website. Dr Taylor suggested that she should update her paper and this be discussed at our next meeting and an agreed plan formulated (HT). Mr Kirkbright warned that a major portion of our income came from Gift Aid and interest on our investments and that in the past we had run at a loss, which could happen again. We should aim to hold sufficient funds to avoid this.

18/08 **TONE FROM THE TOP**

Dr Taylor gave a brief explanation of her working life which had been over 35 years as a qualified chartered accountant, initially as an auditor with a major accounting firm and subsequently in accounting, financial and regulatory reporting in a major institution in the financial services sector. She said that we needed to be more proactive about our aims, for by doing so we would encourage our members to be equally so. She said that a good example of this was the positive and upbeat attitude of our journal editor. She mentioned that the minutes of our meetings should be more positive and that perhaps we needed to have a summary of key points from our meetings appearing in our journal, say a précis version. Mr Harris said that the minutes contained any updates to the Officers' reports as recorded at the meeting and that the draft minutes were then circulated within this committee for any amendments, before being circulated, as an agreed version, to contributors, branches, zone reps and Society records and anybody else that requested a copy. Mr Harris said that he quite often used his judgement as to what he recorded to avoid possible offence and that they were issued in accordance with the rules of the Society and it was said that any précis version should be circulated around this committee, prior to publication, for our agreement. It was agreed that Mrs Vanden Bon would liaise with the Journal Editor with a view to producing such a précis, following the procedure set out by Mr Harris (AVB). Mr Harris also said that it was rarely possible to forecast a conclusion to any future plans we discussed at our meetings, but that we did try to be as positive as possible in the circumstances. It was also said that most members were not interested in the minutes unless they contained an item of specific interest, but it was also said that those people who did read them found them interesting, which then led to a discussion on members not providing either their email or the correct one to the Society Membership Secretary which did not help us with adequate communication with them.

18/09

### ACCOUNTING ISSUES

Dr Taylor had produced another paper on this and said that the Society annual accounts did not include the monetary assets and income and expenditure of our various branches and zones, which according to the Charity Commissioners they should. She was well aware of the problems involved and had tried to find a technical accounting solution or exemption to them, but none was available. Mr Arnold said that Dr Taylor had answered most of the points that her paper had raised and that we now needed to plan what to do with this problem. He said that on reflection his suggestion about approaching one of his work experts in Lincoln was not appropriate and that we needed to ask somebody local to where our accounts were audited, i.e. we needed to find out the facts of this and establish our auditors' understanding of the problem (**DK**). However, Mr Kirkbright was adamant that he was not prepared to insist that branches provide their asset details as he felt that this would destroy any trust that he had built up with the branches. After further discussion it was agreed that as it was a Charity Commission requirement, we needed to comply and that somebody other than Mr Kirkbright should therefore write to all our branches and zones, explaining that it was a Charity Commission requirement why we needed them all to supply their financial details, so this could be done. Dr Taylor said that our members should be made aware of this situation at the A.G.M. and that there was no issue for branches or zones having to justify their financial status as most were living on their financial reserves to keep them running. It was suggested that branches be sent a simple form in the near future outlining these requirements, so that branches and zones could understand what they needed to provide and asking for these to be completed and returned as soon as possible (**possibly DK**). Any assistance would be provided to branches and zones on request.

18/10

### WEBSITE UPDATE

Mr Hildyard said that progress had been frustratingly slow and response to emails even more so, but had speeded up recently. However, he thought that we were getting there. He gave a progress report on the 18 aspects to be addressed and showed that 11 of these had been completed and that the remainder were in progress. He said that having looked at the new Forum properly, he had had to highlight a few issues, as part of the specification was to retain all current Forum functionality. We had also spoken about a 'like' type button and could Forums be restricted by user group. He also said that the 'Plant of the Month' issue marked as completed by Pedalo was not what we originally specified and needed to display the latest ones. Pedalo had given us the go ahead to start adding content and had agreed to an April target for completion. We also needed to have an agreed content. Mr Kirkbright said that he had made certain changes to the Membership database, but was yet to see these appear on the new website. Mr Hildyard warned that we would need to observe the G.D.P. regulations on information on our new website.

18/11

### SEED PURCHASER

Mrs Mace would contact both Andy Palmer and a new volunteer Colin McKellar to ask if they were willing to share the job of Seed Purchaser starting for the season 2020. She would also let Mr Rushforth know of this and would ask that he liaised with them both on what was required (**SM**).

18/12

### FUTURE PUBLICATIONS

1. Books – These were still the proposed *Eriosyce* book by Roger Ferryman and Graham Evans and the proposed new *Matucana* book by Graham Charles, if agreeable by the authors. It was said that any branch that still ran a library could buy Society books at a 50% reduced price.
2. Calendar – It had already been agreed that we would produce a 2019 Calendar, but Mr Hildyard said that somebody else should choose the photographs for this. It was also suggested that the current binding arrangement used on the calendar be changed to a wire binding to avoid problems when hanging it up. However, it was said that this would caused problems with the wire binding being flattened when going through the Post Office sorting machines.

18/13

### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Next B.o.T. Meeting – Mr Harris said that he would not be able to attend this and tendered his advanced apologies. However, he would be able to undertake the advance work needed for it (organising the agenda, liaising with the venue and asking for the advance reports from ancillary Officers), so it just needed somebody else to produce the minutes.
2. Dr Alasdair Glen – As it was his last meeting as Chairman, Dr Gibbs thanked him for his service to the Society on behalf of this committee which showed its appreciation by applause.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 4.15pm.

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**NEXT MEETING: 26<sup>th</sup> May 2018** 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 1.30p.m.