

BRITISH CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting, held on Saturday 5th May 2012 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 Larius (AL)	Journal Editor
	Dr Tony Mace (AM)	Publications & Internet Officer
	Mr Barry Tibbetts (BT)	Shows Committee Representative
	Mr John Arnold (JA)	Legal Advisor
	Mrs Suzanne Mace (SM)	Committee
	Mr Bill Hildyard (BH)	Committee/Forum Moderator
	Dr Roland Tebbenham (RT)	Committee

AGREED VERSION

12/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mrs Alice Vanden Bon.

12/12 MINUTES OF THE B.O.T. MEETINGS HELD ON 25TH FEBRUARY 2012

These were formally ratified and signed.

12/13 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None

12/14 ELECTRONIC DECISION MAKING

1. R.H.S. – It had made an offer of an initial reduced membership to our Society members and a £5 per joining member payment to our Society, but on investigation the saving offered was not much less than currently available and it was felt the return was not worth the effort, so we had not signed up to the scheme. This led to a discussion on the increasing overhead costs when exhibiting at major R.H.S. shows and it was felt that we should make our concern known at this increased cost and lack of support to affiliated Societies. All branches taking part in R.H.S. shows would be contacted to see if this was a general trend before the complaint was made. **(EH)**

12/15 COMMUNICATIONS

1. Leeds Branch – The secretary had contacted Dr Glen concerning charging for the Welcome Packs whilst they were available on the website for free. It had been pointed out that the web information was not downloadable and that the packs were aimed at non-members, but he still felt aggrieved.
2. Awards – 5 A.O.M awards were agreed. A quote for a further 100 A.O.M. badges was still to be obtained **(DK)**. It was suggested that the award system be publicised in CactusWorld, in say the December issue.

12/16 REPORTS OF OFFICERS

1. Vice-Chairman:

- a) Branches/Zones – Dr Gibbs said there was little extra to report from that at the A.G.M. apart from confirming with Scunthorpe branch that their merger with Lincoln branch had been approved. Tony Morris would now transfer all their members to Lincoln branch. The contact would pass this on to the membership. All branches and Zones had now received a copy of the new Speakers List and this had also been added to the Branch Officials area on the Forum as two files for downloading, one for on screen reading and another for printing as a booklet. He still needed to contact a few speakers to confirm their assent, or not, to their names appearing on the external Society's list and also the abbreviated list for the web site. This he hoped to complete soon.
- b) He had had a series of queries from John Gander, some of which he had already answered. However, it had been asked if the membership list printouts could be made clearer and also contain email addresses. This latter point was already in place. He also said that the Devon and Cornwall branches had problems attracting speakers due to the high fuel costs and it was agreed that if they could arrange Zone mini-tours by re-arranging their meeting dates, this may be a solution. It was also asked if we could influence better coverage of our plants on TV, but this was a known, on-going problem.

2. Membership Secretary:

Mr Morris stated that since February 2012 he had enrolled 32 new members, comprising 24 Full, 6 Senior and 2 Junior, 2 of whom had also subscribed to Bradleya. This compared with 23 in total for the same period last year. Of these, only one was an overseas member and one a re-instated former member. 20 of these had joined via the website and 42 had duplicated their subscription following the inclusion of the free envelope in the March CactusWorld. All of these, except one, had been returned, the exception being happy to pay again (felt it was good value) and this was used to pay another person's 2013 subscription.

3. Treasurer:

- a) Membership – Mr Kirkbright reported that membership to date compared with last year was: Full 1565 (-59), Senior 896 (+46), Junior 14 (+8), which when taken together, the journal taking membership total was 2475 (-5). Associate

membership was 221 (-18) whilst Bradleya subscriptions were 512 (-24). 90 Full members had switched to Senior, 36 the other way. There was some discussion on the 10% decline in current Bradleya subscriptions and it was suggested that all new members receive a past copy of Bradleya to try to encourage subscription and that we also try to establish reasons for this decline (**DK**). There was also discussion on a possible replacement for Dr Walker as Bradleya editor as he wished to resign from the position at the end of this year.

- b) PayPal Transactions – Much of our income was now via this but was showing an adverse effect. Whilst 21% of UK subscriptions, 80% of overseas and 44% of current Bradleya had been paid via PayPal, only 20% of donations received had come via this route. It would appear that those renewing online are less inclined to make a donation at the same time than those sending a cheque and renewal form. It was agreed that our PayPal web page be changed to include donation information (**AM**). With the changed status of our PayPal account to be recognised as a charity, together with the use of their virtual terminal and the closing of our Barclaycard merchant account, the total charges cost had dropped from an average last year of 3.4% of transactions to 3% this year.
- c) Publication Sales – The cost recovery on the new *Echinocereus* book had now reached 81%, needing to sell a further 160 copies to break even.
- d) December 2011/March 2012 CactusWorld Distribution – Following the omission of the prepaid envelope in the December 2011 journal, a letter/renewal form with prepaid envelope was included with the March issue and these plus journal were sent out to all who had received the December issue, whether or not they had renewed for 2012, less any deleted and plus any new members since December. Whilst a number took the opportunity to renew, it actually led to some duplicating their payments (*see minute 12/16/2*). When the chase up letters went out two weeks ago, one member actually complained that he had been sent the March issue in error, that he had not opened it and if the return postage was paid, he would return it (he obviously had not read the enclosure). Furthermore, as he had allowed his membership to lapse, he felt that we should have telephoned him to ascertain if he wished to renew rather than sending a letter. It would appear that no matter what we send or how we send it, there was a substantial number of our members who just did not properly read what they were sent. Largely as a result of the chase-up letters, the number of last year's Full members who remained un-renewed had fallen from 188 to 141 and of last year's Senior members, these had fallen from 99 to 60. However, despite a number of reminders and messages sent to other officials in their branch, there were still three Branch Officers yet to renew.
- e) Stock Values & Bradleya – Sales of Bradleya back issues this year were at approximately half the level of last year to date. He had therefore further reappraised the situation regarding stock values, particularly of Bradleya and as result, in a normal year would treat Bradleya in the same way as Cactusworld, where all the expenditure in the year of production would be written off. This year would be unusual as production was not expected to occur within the financial year, so all pre-subscriptions would be carried forward to the following year.

4. **Shows Committee:**

- a) Mr Tibbetts reported that Ray Stephenson had now joined the Shows Committee in place of John Betteley, although John would continue until after the National Show. Ray had agreed to be the lead for the 10th edition of the Guide to Shows handbook and would seek external advice as necessary. This was planned for 2015 publication.
- b) Arrangements were more or less finalised for the National Show and meetings had been held with both Wood Green and Cambridge branch, the former to discuss our requirements and layout at Wood Green (all agreed) and the latter, responsibilities and tasks to be undertaken by Cambridge branch (also all agreed). Entry wrist bands were now available, raffle tickets sent out to all branches and all but three stewards for judges and photographers arranged. A minimum standard of photographic equipment and procedure had been agreed and Ian Thwaites was to arrange the production of the associated CD/DVD and its format. All show classes had now been sponsored. There was no current news on whether Anne Swithinbank or the new Australian Kew director would be attending.
- c) There was some discussion on how the show would be covered in CactusWorld. The Shows Committee had hoped that it would be spread over two issues and this was agreed, the first part in the December issue being about the show, the people and major winners and the second as an included 16 page supplement of plant photographs with the March issue and would also appear on our website. It could also be used to publicise the covering CD/DVD.

5. **Conservation Committee:**

- a) Dr Maddams in a written report said there had been no new developments since those reported at the A.G.M.
- b) Ex-Situ Conservation – He said that the penultimate paragraph of the article to appear in the September CactusWorld briefly dealt with the procedure when members wished to leave their collections to the Society for disposal and advised that this be done via the Board of Trustees, contacted via the Society Secretary. Because there was no clear mechanism for such cases, likely to be limited in number and frequency, the Conservation Committee would consider the matter if this is the wish of the Board, but needed advice on some aspects of the process, such as storage prior to sale and availability of finance for the sale, and asked that the Board provided clear terms of reference for the Conservation Committee. Mrs Mace had been given a letter for distribution to branches and Zones laying out a suggested procedure. Discussion of this by the Board suggested one modification that should be made to this before distribution; that it should refer to the reports certain people had written on their experience of disposal procedure rather than mentioning them by name as a point of contact and that any guidance/queries should be channelled via the Society Secretary or Conservation Committee. These points would be checked with Dr Maddams (**JA**), the letter modified and sent out to branches via Mr Morris.
- c) Student Travelling Scholarship – In view of recent rejection by the Research and Conservation Committees of requests by two Kew students for grants to cover their travelling expenses to study succulent plants in habitat as part of their training, he suggested that to cover future similar requests (not likely to be frequent), either a single annual competitive grant of say £1,000 be set up for a travel scholarship (as part of the Society's educational and charity work), or the terms of the conservation grants be expanded to include this remit. The Committee wished to know the views of the Board on this.

6. **Research Committee:**

Mr Hill had reported nothing additional to that already said at the recent A.G.M.
7. **Advertising/Journal Production Officers:**
 - a) Advertising – Mr Quail in a written report said that the 2nd quarter advertising income was £480 and that June had been disappointing, having lost another series of four advertiser. Cactus Mall had replaced their series of 4 advert. with a ¼ page one and there had been virtually no take up of the National Show themed adverts.
 - b) B.C.S.S. Information Sheets – Mrs Vanden Bon & Mr Quail reported that plans were now in place for sets ordered for large shows to be on a sale or return basis, with all major shows and contacts identified. Mr Slade had produced an excellent sales aid for the Harrogate Show which Mr Quail had now modified slightly and added an additional sheet to make it suitable as a B.C.S.S. marketing assistance for all branches.
 - c) Journal Production – Mrs Vanden Bon & Mr Quail reported that production of the June journal was in progress, but with continuing problems; both with the new versions of Quark and until recently, only they being available for design and layout work due to Stephen Morris' work commitments. There had also been delays with proofreading, which made work more time-consuming. However, the new fonts and templates introduced for the March journal were working well and both editors were doing an excellent job, with many ideas for themes and articles and undertaking the detailed technical standards which ensured consistency, improved efficiency and reduced corrections needed. A particular problem was still associated with deadlines. These were clearly stated in each journal (10th of January, April, July and October (apart from branch reports)), so should be easy to achieve (there was a special arrangement with Alan Hill for A.G.M. reports). These were not target dates, but the last possible date for material receipt. Unless these were observed, the workload became unmanageable and a steady flow of material did improve things and allowed accurate planning and achievement of content, layout and printing targets. This was especially true of the Forum reports which were consistently late. It was also felt that unless additional members were added to the editorial team, the Trustees might need to consider having paid assistance to help reduce the risk of not meeting future printing deadlines.
8. **Bradleya Editor:**

Dr Walker was unable to give a report due to being abroad, but nothing had changed to that reported at the recent A.G.M.
9. **Journal Editor:**

Mr Laius reported that the March issue went out on 16th March and authors copies sent out on 19th March. Postage had been higher due to more authors being involved but he was currently checking on ways of reducing this, especially in the light of recent postal cost rises. Response to the March journal had been favourable and Mr Harris passed over a member's note to this effect. However, response to what members wished to see had been limited and would probably become apparent with personal communication, although a few suggestions had been made. He had 15 articles in hand of which 8 were already designed, enough to fill the June and September issues, and no production problems were anticipated. The December issue would of course include the National Show report which would take up a sizeable portion and he was liaising with Mike Stansbie and Ian Thwaites on this (*see also minute 12/16/4*). He also showed an English version of the Italian journal, Piante Grasse. There was also discussion on the need to recruit additional members to the Journal Production team and who might be possible candidates.
10. **Publications/Internet Officer:**
 - a) Internet – Dr Mace reported that he still had to resolve the server problems and transfer to the new faster, larger machine. Work on checking out the new server was progressing very slowly due to constant interruptions to fix users' current problems but fortunately the old server had shown no further signs of integrity deterioration. He had had to extend the contract on both servers until the end of May which meant a doubling of costs. Apart from that, the systems were working reasonable well, apart from some slowing when server backup occurred, but the problems had meant he had been unable to progress the on-line database project. This might need chasing as other involved members had not produced any initiative on this. Sheila Cude was proactively chasing branches with outdated web pages at her own initiative, which was helpful.
 - b) Publications – A large number of publicity packs (Membership forms, Publication order forms and spare sample journals) as well as routine book orders, had been shipped over the quarter. With the latest postal increases, a move to a 3 tier postage price structure may be necessary as overseas rates had escalated more than U.K. rates, but he was reluctant to do so until the m-bag rates were known. An agreement had been reached with Cactus & Co to publish an English language version of Succulents in Nature, cost to be £19 and available for sale at the National Show and ELK. Cactus & Co would do the layout work and we would need to include our logo, charity number and an I.S.B.N. A prepublication order form would be included with the June CactusWorld. Disposal of the excessive stock of early journals was in progress.
11. **Update on the Society Future Projects:**
 - a) Speakers List – Dr Tebbenham congratulated Dr Gibbs on the issue of this and its layout which made it more user friendly and also included the new rules and digital programmes. He intended (with Dr Gibbs) to contact speakers who had indicated they would offer digital programmes to the library.
 - b) Digital Programme Library – He gave the current progress with this. The feedback form had been finalised and would be written to all CDs purchased by branches. A 1Tb external hard drive had been prepared for issue to the Slide Librarian which would be passed over after adding more completed programmes. In the meantime, David Greenaway would advise him of any orders, which the team would take the necessary action to fulfil and in the meantime, pdf files of slideshows with minimal caption information could be created. He also suggested that the Slide Librarian monitored slide condition and withdrew sets when they were considered unusable, these to then be reported in CactusWorld. Digital conversion continued with 9 now available, 13 ready for final file build, 16 being scanned/correlated and 12 yet to start; a total of 50. Peter Arthurs was still to meet his schedule of programme file production (none to date), despite being given a running order and had agreed to prepare a basic process flow and master style which could be used to encourage other team

members to help. He gave a progress report on 3 new programmes which were proving problematic and said we needed to discover an effective way/means of capturing commentaries and anecdotes to enliven future programmes. Discussion what help could be offered to branches on obtaining/accessing suitable equipment for showing digital programmes suggested that some branches/zones might have a member with suitable equipment which they might loan/hire out or a local authority which might do the same. It was also useful to look out for internet sources/shops which offered shop-soiled equipment for sale at a significant saving if they wished to buy equipment.

c) Branch Promotional CD – He was unaware of any progress by Peter Arthurs to date.

12. **Forum/Website:**

Mr Hildyard reported that current Forum membership was some 422, including branch officials and zone reps. The software was due an update soon and activity was much as usual. On the website, the Plant of the Month feature had been well received, with Sheila Cude to provide future items. It would appear that a fair number of members had now accessed the Members Only section although there were a number of pages yet to be completed (he provided a list of these). One future addition to be investigated was a form of encyclopedia. He would have a Forum table at the National Show. We were still to set up a web site for future use for electronic publications (*see also minute 11/31*) but this was awaiting input from Peter Arthurs.

12/17 **SOCIETY CONVENTION**

Mr Kirkbright had circulated a copy of the quote from the University for comment and approval and said that the main feedback had been that we should try to get an earlier start to allow more preparation time. We also needed to establish the charging system used for both facilities and accommodation. Mr Morris had provided an initial plan of the new building but this needed updating and then Dr Tebbenham would produce a dimensioned layout. It was also said that we should be aware that university functions took booking precedence. Mr Laius had made initial contact with several proposed speakers and other names were suggested. This list needed to be finalised and the approximate costs established before the convention application form appeared in CactusWorld and needed to be done on a priority basis. It was suggested that the spare wristbands (in two colours) from the 2008/2012 National shows be used to identify the three grades of visitors and it was also said that additional people had been recruited for the committee.

12/18 **TRUSTEE STATUS**

Currently, under the rules of the Charities act, all members of this Board had to be Society Trustees, although this role could be declined, such members then losing their Board voting rights. As some members had dual roles, this had led to various rule changes to cover situations where they might lose their trustee status if they lost one of these roles. This had led to a situation which was both awkward to administer and could produce a proliferation of Trustees. There was discussion on ways of making this more manageable and similar to that which existed before the Charities Act when there were only 4 Trustees. It was proposed, seconded and agreed that the Trustees should be those elected as Society Officers by the Society membership (Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary), the 4 annually elected Trustees (as they represented the membership), plus the Treasurer and one other, i.e. 9 in total to avoid a hung vote. It was agreed that the 9th Trustee be our legal advisor, but Mr Morris said that the Membership Secretary was an important post and should be considered for Trusteeship if and when he gave up the post. The remaining current members of the Board should be classed as advisors, reporting to the revised Board on their area of responsibility and if they wished, being invited to attend BoT meetings. Their presence at these meetings would not be a prerequisite of their office. It would not completely solve the current problem but would simplify the Society rules. This would be done for next year's A.G.M. (DK).

12/19 **SOCIETY PROMOTION OFFICER**

There was discussion on the current c.v. and several changes/deletions were suggested to make it more attractive. A revised c.v. would be compiled and circulated for comment before being finalised as an advertisement and included in CactusWorld, the suggested layout of which was discussed (EH/DK).

12/20 **SOCIETY WEB SITE UPDATE**

There was nothing additional to that reported in minute 12/16/12. Serious concern was expressed at the lack of progress by Peter Arthurs on the forward development of the website and other projects with which he was involved.

12/21 **FUTURE PUBLICATIONS**

Nothing definite other than that reported in minute 12/16/10(b).

12/22 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1. Society Fellowship – We had been informed that one of our Fellows would not be renewing his subscription after this year and it was agreed that the award of Society Fellowship did not cease on resignation from the Society.
2. Society President – In view of John Pilbeam's intent to resign at next year's A.G.M. there was discussion on a possible replacement. A nominee was suggested and this would be investigated.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 4.40pm.

NEXT MEETING: 1st September 2012 at the Holiday Inn, London Road, Newport Pagnell, MK16 0JA (just off junction 14 of M1). It would start at 11 a.m. and light refreshments would be served at 1p.m.