

The Southern African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 29 -- December, 2014



From the Editor

David Victor

So, here we are at Christmas once again, though looking out of my window it looks more like the autumn rains, than winter: I had not realised until I moved to the West Country just how wet it gets.

There is some sad news in this newsletter: one of our founder Members, Rupert Bowlby, passed away in October last. I would like to thank Richard White, on behalf of us all, for compiling a short obituary for this newsletter.

Sadly, due to some unforeseen circumstances I did not manage to get to South Africa this autumn. However, Bill did and as a result I will be particularly looking forward to his talk at the spring meeting. Bill's talks are always interesting and I am sure that we will all enjoy this event.

I would particularly like to thank the contributors to this issue. For once I did not have to force anyone's arms up their backs to get a few measly words: I got a whole newsletter's worth without any effort. So, thank you all very much indeed and keep up the good work.

For the moment, let me wish you all a wonderful Christmas and New Year on behalf of the whole Committee.

Spring meeting 2015

Our next meeting will be held on Sunday, 29th March at our normal venue, the Badger Farm Community Centre near Winchester. As in previous meetings, the doors will open at 10.00, with our speaker taking the stage at 11.00. The meeting will close at 16.00.

Our speaker at this meeting will be our Chairman, Bill Squire. As you all know, Bill is a regular traveller to South Africa and this autumn he went on yet another trip there. So, Bill will be talking about the delights that he saw this year and will doubtless concentrate on bulbs. Bearing in mind his keen interest in *Lachenalia*, I will be very surprised if there aren't quite a lot of them in the mix.

As in all meetings, there will be a display table for any plants that you care to bring along to show Members. We hope to organise one of our informal discussions periods during the afternoon, so that Members can show their plants and answer any questions other might have. If any of you have slides or jpeg's of plants that you would like to show, please bring them along.

There will also be a sales table where you can offer material for sale on an 80:20 Member to Group basis. Please include double labels on pots, showing the price so that we can settle up easily at the end of the day.

There will be a lunch break from 12.30 until 14.00. For those of you that have not come before, it's worth adding that many Members bring their own food so that they can have the opportunity to chat to others. Alternatively, the Sainsbury's supermarket is based on the same site.

As usual, the charge for the meeting will be £3.00 each, payable at the door.

Directions to the meeting hall

Meetings are held at the Badger Hall Community Centre, near Winchester and, for those of you using satnav's or Google Earth, the post code is SO22 4QB.

By road, leave the M3 at junction 11 and proceed towards Winchester. At the first roundabout follow the sign to Winchester. At the second roundabout take the second exit up the hill towards Badger Farm. At the third roundabout take the third exit to the superstore (not the second exit marked Badger Farm). Follow the road right round the edge of the car park until you see the doctor's surgery. Next to it is the Centre.

There is plenty of room in the car park and it is free: However, this privilege depends on Members filling in the form at the entrance giving the car's registration details.

Autumn Meeting, 2015

We have yet to fix the date for the Autumn meeting and, thus, the speaker. I will circulate details when they are arranged.

Rupert Bowlby

Rupert originally worked for the Dutch bulb grower Van Tubergen 40 years ago, before striking out on his own and setting up his own nursery, straightforwardly named "The Bulb Nursery" at Gatton Park, near Reigate in Surrey. The SABG visited and had a meeting at his nursery on 9th April 2005, as reported in Newsletter no. 4.

He used to put on wonderful displays of alliums at Chelsea but more recently he was captivated by South African bulbs and came to concentrate entirely on them, offering a large range for sale each year. He raised them mainly from seed imported from South African sources, such as Silverhill Seeds and Kirstenbosch NBG, sold them in the retail trade from his nursery, and exported them to other parts of the EU.

Ursula Buchan wrote an article which appeared in the Daily Telegraph Gardening section on or around 18th September 2004, with the title "Adorn your borders with Cape jewels" (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/3323440/Adorn-your-borders-with-Cape-jewels.html>). She based the article on advice she received from Rupert, whom she described as "a bulb man through and through", and reported that he said he dealt in species, or selected forms of species, because they're tougher: "I like the ones God made the best." He also said that it was their beauty, variety and, often, rarity which made them irresistible. "I'm an inveterate collector," he said. "I always want the other one." Ursula commented that "we need inveterate collectors; they do the hard experimental work which makes gardening a pleasure for the rest of us."

In November 2007, he closed his nursery and placed a notice on his web site at www.rupert.bowlby.care4free.net, which is still there now. "After many enjoyable and fulfilling years I have decided to close the The Bulb Nursery. Thank you for all your support over the years. I have given my collection of more than 600 species and varieties of South African bulbs to the R.V. Roger nursery." You can continue to view a small selection of his plants on his own web site. You can also find his material (no doubt somewhat changed in the intervening years) by mail order, email, phone and web site: R.V. Roger, The Nurseries, Malton Road, Pickering, North Yorkshire YO18 7JW (tel: 01751 472226; email: sales@rvroger.co.uk).

***Haemanthus* collection**

Hans Joschko

I would like to report you from my success in this year from my summer growing *Haemanthus*: here are some pictures. All these plants were grown by me from seeds coming from African Bulbs (Cameron McMaster), having been originally sown in 2005 and 2006.



H. humilis ex Keibolo



H. carneus



H. humilis pale form



H. humilis giant form

The Autumn meeting plant table

Richard White



An unusual bulb

Bill Squire

On a visit to South Africa in September 2011, I came across a very unusual plant a few miles South of Darling, near the west coast. It was about 12-15 inches tall with very wavy edges to the leaves and it had a ripe seed-head, with yellow/orange seeds, about 5mm in diameter. It had to be a winter flowering plant but not one that I recognised. On my return, I sowed the seed and two germinated and grew on, finally flowering in November this year. I had no idea as to what it was, so sent photo's to Cameron and Rhoda McMasters, who identified it as *Freesia viridis* subsp. *crispifolia*.



Lachenalia arenicola

The Editor

Graham Duncan has recently published*** this new species from material gathered in deep sand (the epithet means “sand dwelling”) near the Green River (Groen Rivier) mouth, Northern Cape Province. It is:

“similar to *L. xerophila* in its disc-shaped perianth tube, brownish mauve outer tepals, subequal outer and inner tepals, straight filaments, globose ovaries, obcordate capsules and smaller, ovoid seeds with inflated, longer strophioles; differs from *L. glauca* (Barker 1989: 639) Duncan (2012: 299) in its disc-shaped perianth tube, longer outer and inner tepals, strongly inflated scape, globose bulb and strongly cartilaginous leaf margins.”

I am grateful to Bill Squire, our Chairman and Curator of the National Collection of *Lachenalia*, for bringing this to my attention.

*** *Phytotaxa* 186 (5) 297-300 “*Lachenalia arenicola* (*Asparagaceae*, *Scilloideae*), a new species from western South Africa.”

Wanted Column

I have not received any particular requests for this newsletter which is, perhaps, not surprising in view of our recent bulb and seed exchange.

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