

The Southern African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 24 -- Christmas, 2012



From the Editor

David Victor

The most important thing to bring to your attention in this newsletter is that the date of the Spring meeting has been changed. In our last newsletter I told you that it would be on 31st March. However, in setting this date we had overlooked that fact that it is Easter Sunday, a day that few of you could (or in view of the likely traffic would want to) make. As a result, we have moved the date to Sunday, 7th April, rather later than we would normally wish but, hopefully, not likely to clash with other meetings that Members are likely to attend. Further details will be found later on.

I have been asked to remind those Members who do not receive our newsletters by email that we ask them to donate to the group the additional postal costs involved. The best way to do this is by providing us with stamped and addressed envelopes. Alternatively, please let Alina have stamps or an equivalent cash donation. Her address is:

Alina Hughes, 9 Paynsford Road, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 2PS

Incidentally, Alina has passed on the contact details of a new South African bulb supplier by the name of Rob Scott. He can be contacted at www.shirebulbs.co.za.

As it happens, Bill and I know Rob, who accompanied us with Cameron's 2011 tour up the western side of South Africa. I remember that he was always steaming ahead of us, camera at the ready and taking some extremely good photographs. He also has eco-lodges which he rents to tourists in Stutterheim in the Eastern Cape.

Bill tells me that one of our Members, Lesley Baker, has been doing us proud on the Hampshire AGS group's web site. After the last meeting, Lesley wrote a very positive review of the meeting and, in particular, the display table, suitably supported

by photographs. She also included a very supportive review of *Nerine* day. Thank you Lesley!

“The Genus *Lachenalia*” –by Graham Duncan

A review by the Editor

It’s only two years since we reviewed the last book by this author: That was his “*Grow bulbs - a Guide to the cultivation and propagation of the bulbs of South Africa and neighbouring countries*”. And what a book it was, with its encyclopaedic overview of all forms of southern African bulbous plants, with growing advice based on the many years of practical experience that Graham has gained as Curator of bulbous plants at SANBI’s Kirstenbosch botanic gardens.

Now, only two years later we are being offered yet another feast of information. However, this time, rather than being spread across the broad spectrum of bulbous flora, this book is confined to a single genus, *Lachenalia*. For clarity, however, it should be noted that *Lachenalia* here includes the genus *Polyxena*, following the molecular work reported in 2004 by Manning et al.

So, what do we have here? Well, to start with over 450 pages of descriptive writing concerning the genus, supported by 39 full page coloured plates by a variety of South Africa’s leading botanical artists and a multitude of line drawings and coloured photographs, all delivered in a hard-cover book. In total, it comprises a monograph of the genus, although there are indications that more is still to come. In particular, whilst some studies have been carried out at a molecular level they do not, as yet, agree with his cladistic studies based on morphology.

However, for all of that, the main “meat” of this book as far as the bulb enthusiast is concerned is Section 6, the “*Taxonomic Treatment*”. Duncan divides the genus into two sub-genera: *Lachenalia* & *Polyxena* and offers a full dichotomous key for the genus. The former, containing 133 species, he then divides into 5 sections based on the shape of the perianth, the latter containing 7 species is not further divided. Each species is then individually described, with sub-headings covering synonymy, etymology, a full description, flowering period, its history, distinguishing characteristics, distribution and is accompanied by the relevant illustrations.

At the start of the taxonomic treatment, Duncan gives his definition of a species as being “..the smallest aggregation of freely interbreeding populations or lineages that is reproductively isolated from other such populations, diagnosable by a unique combination of character states in comparable individuals.” This is not only a useful definition for all of us, but it also helps to explain the 11 new species which are described. For example, he explains that varieties of *L. aloides* and *L. tricolor*, which look similar have been carefully analysed and have been shown to consist of 5 well-established species and three totally new species, *L. callista*, *L. patentissima* and *L. thunbergii*.

The quality of this book is extremely high in all respects: Its technical content, the illustrations, the book itself and, by no means least, the extremely well-written

English. Whilst it carries a high price, it is an invaluable addition to the enthusiasts book-shelf.

The book is a Botanical Magazine Monograph, published by Kew Publishing and is available from Kew Books and others. ISBN 978-1-84246-382-6

Spring Meeting 2013

As mentioned above, the next meeting will be held on 7th April 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 will be Jon Evans who, as most of you will know, takes many beautiful photographs of the plants at AGS shows. His title for our meeting will be 'Taking Better Pictures of Flowers' and will include various aspects of photography including:

- taking photos around plant shows
- more formal 'studio' shots (the sort of images used in the Alpine Gardener)
- close ups
- taking photos in gardens and in the wild (UK only)

Jon has volunteered to also set up a temporary studio during the lunch break, similar to the one he uses at shows, if people would be interested in him doing so. For this, we will be keeping the end table, nearest to the window, free for his purposes.

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 a 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 or, this time, take advantage of Jon's offer. 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 Community 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.

Member request

Hans Joschko

I am trying to find material of *Ammocharis baumii* (sometimes known as *Crinum baumii*) for my collection. I have scoured all of the normal sources for this plant but to no avail; it is really difficult to find!

I did get a plant with this name from a contact in South Africa two years ago, but it has now flowered and, to my disappointment, it is a *Nerine*sigh! In meantime, I have also asked Kurt Vickery, but he has no ideas.

So, if anyone can help, please let me know and thank you in advance !

Best wishes
Hans Joschko

Hans can be contacted at: j.joschko@gmx.de

Brunsvigia minor

Bill Squire

I bought my *Brunsvigia minor* as a 2 year old seedling in 2002. This year it decided to come into flower 2 days before my holiday in South Africa in mid-August (hence the only partially open flowers in the accompanying photo).

I thought it was time I found out a little about the background of this plant so referred to "*The Colour Encyclopedia of Cape Bulb's*" but could find no mention of it so I moved onto "*Spring and Winter Flowering Bulbs of the Cape*" by Barbara Jeppe, again no mention of *B. minor*. I then looked in "*Bulbs*" by John E. Bryan revised edition 2002 and, yes, it states it comes from Namaqualand and Western Cape so I then went onto the Pacific Bulb website typed in *B. minor* and up pops *B. striata*

which includes *B. minor*. So back to “*Bulbs*” where I find Bryan describes both *B. minor* and *B. striata* the first flowers in March to April in the wild with the latter flowering in November to January in habitat and covers the area Mossel Bay to Humansdorp he also states *B. minor* is similar to *B. gregaria* but nothing about *B. striata*!!

Now back to “*Cape Bulbs*” where it describes *B. striata* as flowering from only March to April? And habitat is from Bokkeveld Mountains to Cape Infanta, Montagu and Oudthoorn. As the bulb grows in two different rain-fall patterns I would have assumed that Bryan’s version of flowering times was more logical so I would be pleased to hear from any of our members who grow and flower *B. striata* / *minor* with provenance. I can only sum up by saying goodbye *B. minor* hello *B. striata*.



More about *Brunsvigia minor*

David Victor

I thought that Bill’s article was so amusing that I thought that I would do a little research on the development of these names.

Amaryllis striata was originally described in 1797 by Jacquin and it was changed to *Brunsvigia striata* by Aiton, the chief gardener at Kew, in 1811. However, what neither of these gentlemen realised at the time was that the epithet “striata” had already been used in the genus *Amaryllis* by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck in 1783 for another species, which subsequently became *Hippeastrum striatum*. Thus, the epithet “striata” (in any of its forms) became illegal under botanical nomenclature rules for anything other than the *Hippeastrum*.

Jean L. M. Poiret, writing in Lamarck's Encyclopedia in 1810, recognised the illegality of the striata epithet and coined a new one "nervosa", changing *Amaryllis striata* to *A. nervosa*.

In parallel to all this, *Brunsvigia minor* was first described by John Lindley in the Botanical Register in 1826. Interestingly, he first took it to be a form of *Amaryllis* (now *Nerine*) *laticoma*. What is more, originally it had been imported under the name *Cyrtanthus ventricosus*. So, there's nothing new in name changes! Then, in 1840, Dietrich decided to merge all of the *Brunsvigia* into *Amaryllis*, along with many other members of the *Amaryllidaceae*, converting the name to *Amaryllis minor* and placing it next in sequence to *Amaryllis striata* (ignoring Aiton's change to *Brunsvigia striata*).

Subsequently, it has been recognised that the two plants are in fact the same species and as "nervosa" is the older valid name it has to be taken as the correct epithet. All that having been said, apparently no-one has done the formal work to convert the *Amaryllis* names to *Brunsvigia*, even though everyone accepts these to be members of that genus. As a result, the correct name according to the "World Checklist" is:

Brunsvigia nervosa (Poir.) ined.

Where the term "ined", meaning unpublished, recognises that no author has done the work that everyone accepts.

Late flowering

Alina Hughes

Our bad summer has meant that the majority of my South African bulbs are very late in appearing including the *Nerine*, some of which are still in bud in early November.

What really surprises me are the South African bulbs I grow *indoors*. I have always kept my *Scadoxus* bulbs in ceramic pots in the front room where, because it is not often used, the temperature is kept relatively low in the winter and, since it is south-facing, the blinds are drawn in full sun in the summer. The *Scadoxus membranaceus*, in particular, seems to relish these conditions and produces a lovely flower in late October each year.

However, this year, the low light levels have delayed the flowering by six to eight weeks and the flower bud is only just emerging – the photos below were taken at the same time a year apart:



This year



Last year

The same is also true of the *Eucharis amazonica* which is difficult enough to persuade to flower but look at the comparison below:



8th November 2012



October 2011

It appears that the weather and atmospheric conditions dictate even through house walls!

Your Committee

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And last but by no means least

**All of our best wishes go to Members
for Christmas and 2013!!**