

The Southern African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 25 -- July, 2013



From the Editor

David Victor

Well, I think that a comment I heard on the radio a couple of days ago sums up this summer: “Well, now the longest day is past, it’s time for autumn”! I don’t know how it is where you are, but it has pretty much been like that down here in Somerset. However, one of the many advantages of growing Southern African bulbs is that they mostly need to be under cover, so at least there is some protection from the weather.

First and most importantly in this newsletter, the date for the autumn 2013 meeting has now been set. It will be held on Sunday, 6th October, with all of the other details following our normal arrangements. However, for new Members, they are set out further down this newsletter.

As in previous years, at this meeting we will be concentrating on fresh material from South Africa. Bill Squire and I are taking a trip south during September and will doubtless have a mass of new images and I imagine that there will be other Members in a similar situation. If so and should they be attending the meeting, it would be helpful if they could let me know in advance, so that suitable arrangements can be made for all contributions.

Please note that, as Bill will be away with me in September, he has asked that all donors get their material for the bulb and seed exchange to him by 20th August, so that he can produce his list (with the help of Alice) before he leaves. He will begin despatch of the material soon after his return on 17th September. So, please keep those dates in mind as you re-pot!

Alina has suggested that, in addition to the exchange, we run a “wanted” section in the newsletter. I have to say that I am very much in favour of that idea and will do so in future. This will be done on the basis that you email or mail your requests to me

and that I post them in the newsletter. To minimise the effort required, I will include your contact address with the posting, so that you can deal directly with each other.

Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust

You will have seen the fund-raising circular from Cameron McMaster that I passed around recently. Here's some more background.

Before European settlement, there was a large area of renosterveld located between the areas of Swellendam, Caledon and Bredasdorp. This was an area that originally supported many large game animals and a very diverse flora. Much of this has been lost due to intense farming activity over the years. A new organisation has been formed to conserve that which is left, under its Director, Odette Curtis. Odette was introduced to me by Cameron McMaster and I helped her to identify a number of *Pelargonium* in the area.

Odette discovered a new species of *Hesperantha* in the area a while ago. Rather than decide a new epithet for it herself, she arranged for the Trust to auction it through Fauna and Flora International at an event at the Royal Geographical Society. This produced £29,200 which is being used to help finance the Trust.

If you would like to know more about the organisation go to:

www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za

I'm pleased to add that our the Group made a donation of £100 towards the fund that is being used to finance an extensive photographic survey of the flora and fauna of the Overberg renosterveld remnants, by a team led by Evan Eifler. Although the fund has now raised the full amount originally required, it is still raising further funds to extend the range of work that can be done.

Autumn Meeting 2013

The next meeting will be held on 6th October 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.

The subject for the meeting will be recent photographs from South Africa and any Members who have suitable material are encouraged to present it to the meeting. Bill Squire and I will present our new photographs and would welcome any others who are willing to take up some of the slack!

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.

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

The postcode of the Badger Hall Community Centre for those of you using satnav's or Google Earth 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.

The Guernsey Lily

Douglas' Guernsey Lilly was first published in 1725, much revised and enlarged in the, now very rare, 1729 edition, which was then reprinted in an edition of 1737. In the 1980's Dr Helen Brock undertook a new study of Douglas' work, using Douglas' own papers on the lily from the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow. The result is a fascinating reappraisal of Douglas' work and of the history and provenance of the Guernsey Lily.

Dr Brock's publisher, Leslie Hewitt, was immediately enthusiastic and offered to publish a full facsimile copy of the 1737 edition to accompany Dr Brock's treatise. Sadly Leslie was taken ill and although both the books were eventually printed they were never published and languished in storage for nearly 25 years.

The Clear Vue Publishing Partnership Limited, a specialist Channel Island publisher, is delighted to have now rescued the material and completed publication of the work. It had its first public outing in Guernsey during the *Nerine* Festival in late 2012.

The facsimile of Douglas' manuscript comes complete with the three fold out diagrams of *Nerine sarniensis*. It is hand bound in the traditional manner in a half leather binding, in dark brown calf. The covers are in a hand-marbled paper made

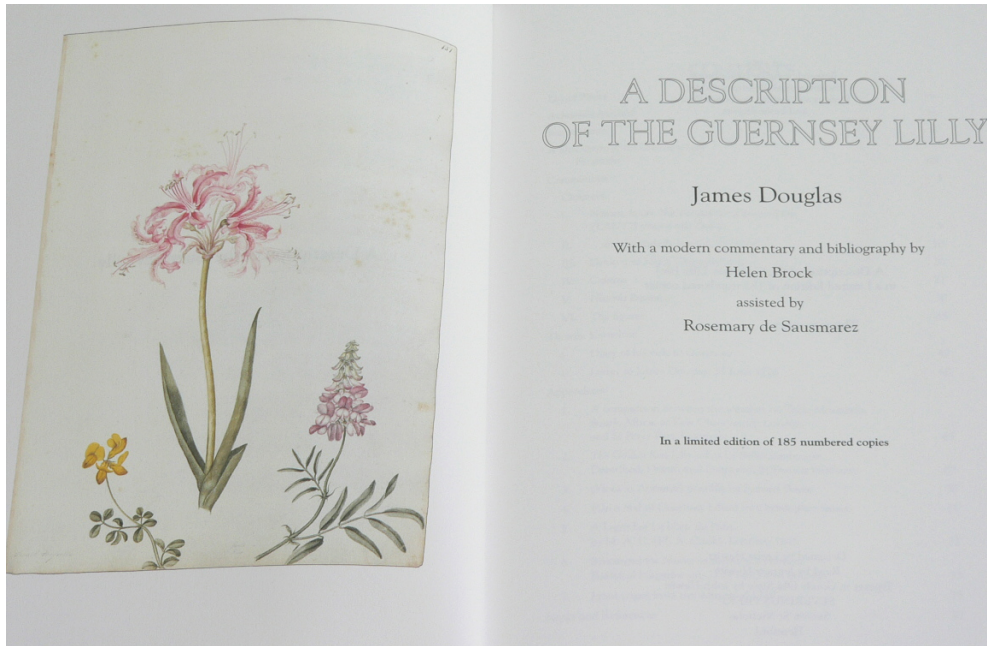
especially for the edition and subtly speckled with gold specks to reflect the beauty of the Guernsey Lily. In contrast Dr Brock's work is hand bound in a modern book cloth binding in a vibrant pink and embossed in white with a drawing of the lily taken from Douglas' work. The two books come complete with a slipcase in dark brown book cloth, also embossed with the lily design.

Dr Brock's work echoes Douglas' original in taking the five chapter headings from it, each chapter providing additional information and context for understanding Douglas' original. There is also a fascinating section on the conflicting accounts of how the Lily came to be in Guernsey as well as several appendixes, four of which are poems relating to the Lily and the final one a facsimile of the first few pages of the 1729 edition.

Only 185 copies of the two book set were produced in that original printing and they are now offered for sale at £375. There is more information and an image gallery of the edition at: www.guernseylily.co.uk

The Guernsey Lily was reviewed by one of our Member, Dr John David from the RHS, in The Journal of the *Nerine* and *Amaryllid* Society, January 2013.





Bill's travelogue Being a description Bill Squire's 2012 trek in the Cape

Wednesday 15th August

Today I drove from Cape Town to Napier in the Overberg District, weather not too good at all, very cloudy with strong winds and cold to boot which meant I needed to wear my pullover for most of the day. I did several stops along the way here and not a lot see other than *Oxalis purpurea*, the weed *O. pes-caprae* and *Eucomis regia* which is the only known spring flowering species in the family. All other flowers seen just refused to open without the sunshine.

Thursday 16th August

Weather even worse today lots of heavy rain with strong winds. I decided to visit Elim which is about 20 miles from Napier. Elim was established in 1824 by German missionaries belonging to the Moravian Church. It was here I saw *Gladiolus punclatus* and I think *G. bullatus* plus *Watsonia coccinea* in full flower for the 1st time. On leaving Elim I made my to Gannsbay and found several plants of *Lachenalia rubida* with seed pods on them, my 1st collection this trip (Danger Point)

Friday 17th August

What a change-it has been wall to wall sunshine all day. I started the day with a breakfast at the local Padstall (Farmstall) a very old cottage converted to serve meals and is run by two very plump, jovial coloured ladies. The only modern furniture was the table and chairs. The display area was made up of old wooden crates turned on their sides and contained home-made jams, pickles and chutneys. In the centre was an old style cast iron stove with the

chimney disappearing into the ceiling, all this to the sound of Frank Sinatra crooning (uugh! not at the breakfast table please). I then drove to De Hoop Nature Reserve and spent the whole day there. Some of the more interesting plants seen today were *Helichrysum vestitum* (also called *Syncarpha*) a beautifully marked *Moraea ciliate*, *Spiloxine serrata* and *Massonia pustulata*, although the latter had finished flowering.

Saturday 18th August

Woke this morning to see a very hard frost on grass, which soon disappeared as the sun got stronger. Today I went up Napier Mountain as this was my last day here. Plenty of *Erica* sp., including *E. coccinea*, *E. longifolia* and *E. sessiliflora* and *Protea* sp., but I only recognised *P. longifolia*.

In the afternoon I travelled to Riverdale and saw *Eucomis regia* again, also came across *Gladiolus brevifolia* not a particularly attractive species to me.

On my return I came across a dead Porcupine so I have acquired a few more spines to add to my collection.

Sunday 19th August

My last breakfast at the Padstall before moving on to Barrydale, and no Sinatra today; instead it was Leslie Garrett belting out her songs! I also noticed a sign on the wall which said "Pink is not just a colour it is—ATTITUDE".

Plants of note I saw today were *Babiana patula* a dainty yellow with a strong scent of lemon, *Gladiolus teretifolius*, a lovely red standing 15 to 18 inches high and *Lachenalia orchioides* plus a couple of tortoises.

Monday 20th August

Today I drove to Ladismith which is about 50 miles North of Barrymore but deeper into the Karoo. Along the way, I saw lots of succulents including *Haworthia*, *Crassula* and *Cotyledon* species, *Aloe* large and small, *Euphorbia* and *Conophytum*. Bulbous plants seen were 2 species of *Albuca*, a *Drimia*, *Massonia depressa* and *Lachenalia obscura*.

Tuesday 21st August

Stayed around Barrydale today and the vegetation was much the same as the previous day except for seeing *Hyobanche sanguinea* which is a root parasite that attaches itself to small shrubs. One of the small "Aloes" I saw yesterday is in fact a *Haworthia*.

Wednesday 22nd August

I moved on to Worcester today and it rained for the first two hours of my journey, so very little chance to botanise. Later the sun broke

through and I saw *Gladiolus venustus* (blue form), both a *Freesia* and *Babiana species* I have yet to identify. It was pointed out by my host that there was snow on the mountains, a fact which I hadn't noticed. I explained that I only look down for plants when in South Africa.

Thursday 23rd August

Visited the Botanical Gardens in Worcester today- what a disappointment! The raised beds in front of the offices were stripped bare, just like a building site. These beds usually display plants from different regions which show the diversity of plants across the regions. I was told the beds were being refurbished. I have to say I enjoyed walking around the rest of the gardens.

Friday 24th August

Today travelled over Bains Kloof Pass which was built in the late 1800's mostly by convicts some of them were brought over from the UK to "help out!" At places I could stop safely and I saw many flowering plants, including a large colony of *Lachenalia orchioides* all with just one single leaf, a pure yellow *Gladiolus species* I didn't recognise and *Androcymbium volutare*. Also lots of annual daisies. Later I moved on to Paarl and drove up the mountain where I saw more interesting plants, one of which was a pure white *Babiana sp.*, just one plant and no other in sight.

To be continued.....

More on *Brunsvigia minor* or *B. nervosa*

This is a reply I received from Jenny & Errol Carr after sending them a copy of our newsletter. David and I travelled with them around Middelpoort after the Symposium two years ago.

Hello Bill,

Many thanks for the SABG Newsletter which you forwarded to us. We found it very interesting especially your write-up on *Brunsvigia minor*. Just to confuse matters or clarify issues here are our comments. We found a lot of *B. minor* (certainly as far as we are concerned!), flowering on a recently burnt area near the top of Gifberg Pass on the day of the Royal Wedding (William & Kate's) at the end of April 2011. We were on an IBSA outing and the party consisted of Jen & I and 2x 80 plus lady members of IBSA !! If you look at the Nieuwoudtville Flower Guide it says flowering March to April on sandy slopes and sandstone plateaus. Cape Bulbs says *B. striata* flowers at the same time, but on heavy, often stony soils, on Bokkeveld Mountains to Cape Infanta, Montagu and Oudtshoorn. We believe that the one we saw was *B. minor* but have written in pencil in Cape Bulbs next to *B. striata*, *B. minor* as we could not tell the difference except for growing conditions.

We were intrigued to read that your members also battle to flower the *Eucharis* lily. We have found only way for us to flower ours, both here and for all our years in

Durban, was to dry them off completely. That occurred by accident initially, when went away for an extended period and no-one to water them. Came back to nothing to be seen except brown/dried up leaves and, hey presto, up came flower buds after a few weeks!

We are hoping that you can confirm our initial thought of *Gethyllis namaquensis* for the pictures. We stopped near Rosh Pinar in Namibia en route back in June, in a very arid landscape and found a group of these leaves just outside the roadside fence. One flowered for 4 days, 2 weeks ago. It is the first that we have flowered and thought you were our best bet, as Alan Horstmann is still over in Ireland.

Best wishes
Errol & Jenny



***Geraniaceae* discussion forum**

As I am sure many of you know, the Geranium family has many members in southern Africa, many of which are tuberous. So Members might be interested to hear that a new discussion forum has been set up by the Geraniaceae Group. This forum is open to anyone and can be joined by going to:

www.geraniaceae-group-forum.org

South African bulb and seed suppliers

I am always happy to include contact details for South African suppliers, though I cannot include a list of their offerings.

Since the last newsletter I have been approached by one that many of you will know, Jim Holmes. Those of you who read the IBSA bulletins will know that Jim is probably the most frequent winner of their awards for the quality and uniqueness of his display plants. Jim has an extensive nursery dedicated to bulbous plants just outside Stellenbosch and can be contacted at: capeseed@iafrica.com

His website is at: www.capeseedandbulb.com

Some places to stay in Winchester (2013)

Bed & Breakfast at £50 and under

1. Magdalen House, 5-9 Magdalen Hill, Winchester SO23 0HJ
Phone 01962 896634
Onsite parking £50 per room per night
2. Mr & Mrs AB Williams, 24 Clifton Rd, Winchester SO22 5BU
01962 851620
Off road parking £ 35 per room per night AA3***
3. ST John's Croft, St John's St, Winchester SO23 0HF
01962 859976/0773 4488893
Onsite parking £40 per room per night
Visit England*** Grade 2 listed
4. Mrs Linda Chalk, 152 Teg Down Meads, Winchester SO22 5NS
01962 862628/07788 858965
Off road parking £38 per room per night
2 miles from City Centre off Stockbridge Rd (B3049)
Visit England***
5. Windy Ridge, 99 Andover Rd, Winchester SO22 6AX
01962 882527/07767 493648
Off road parking £30 per room per night
Visit England***

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