

# The Southern African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 26 -- December, 2013



## From the Editor

David Victor

So, here we are again at the end of another year. Yet another strange one in weather terms; after the rains of last year, this year we had one of the longest and coldest springs I can remember and now we seem to be having an unusually wet and warm early winter. Well, at least it saves on the heating bills, even if the plants are all twice the height that they should be!

We have started a new "Members Wants" column in the newsletter, on the suggestion of Alina Hughes. You will see that our first two requests have come in and we welcome more. If you have a request, please send it to me, by email please. I will print it in the next newsletter and will include your contact details, so that anyone responding can deal directly with you. I hope that you will find this system a useful extra service.

Bill and I took another trip to South Africa this autumn, with my eldest son, who drove, cooked and photographed for us: we older chaps need an increasing amount of support! Both of us are accustomed to the occasional bad weather at that time of the year, so had some warm clothes with us. And that was very lucky indeed for us, as this time we only had one really warm day (see the back page) in the entire trip. For most days there was frost in the morning and often snow on the hills.

However, for all of that, we had a very good trip that took us from Cape Town, through Matjiesfontein, Calvinia, Springbok, Port Nolloth, Alexander's Bay returning via Steinkopf, Springbok, Kamieskroon and Clanwilliam to Cape Town. This route gave us access to many of the great plant-hunting areas of the Western and Northern Cape, including the Komsberg, Roggeveld, Hantamsberg, wester Richtersveld, Bokkeveld, Kamiesberg, Knersvlakte and Cederberg. We also had one of those lucky breaks that sometimes turns up when you rent accommodation from afar. Here is the view from the house we had at Port Nolloth:



And, when the tide went out, the bay immediately outside filled with a flock of flamingos. A wonderful way to end a hard days plant-hunting!

I circulated a note recently saying that I had heard that Viresco, in North Yorkshire, were obtaining some supplies of pumice. I find it works very well in my mixes for my *Pelargonium* collection and I know that a few other people use it. However, it is not easy to get, in my experience. I spoke to John McLauchlan last week and he says that there will be some left after the immediate orders are filled, so if you are interested now is the time to get in touch. His email is [johnjnr@viresco-uk.com](mailto:johnjnr@viresco-uk.com). I should add that a couple of Members contacted me suggesting that the group might put an order together, but I don't think that is really practical with other living so far apart and meeting so infrequently.

Next, I need your help. Firstly, I am starting to develop a new list of potential speakers, as my existing list is nearly complete. So, please let me have any suggestions you may have as to the people you would like to speak at meetings and the subjects you would like covered. Secondly, I need material for this newsletter. While I can carry on ranting at you about subjects that amuse me till the cows come home, that's not fair to either you or me! So, how about some contributions? Just let me have them; I look forward to it.

Finally, your Committee and I offer you our very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year

## **Spring Meeting 2014**

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> 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.

The speaker for the morning session will be Paul Cumbleton and his subject for the meeting will be compost mixes and pot drainage. I am very pleased to say that he will be giving not only advice, but also demonstrations.

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. 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.

### **Members "wants"**

John Sanders contacted me saying that he is looking for a copy of Dee Snijman's monograph "*A Revision of the Genus Haemanthus*", first published in 1984. More particularly, he would prefer a copy in good condition with a dust jacket. If anyone has a copy with which they are willing to part, please contact John at his email address: "john sanders" <sanders@johnsanders48.orangehome.co.uk> or by phone at 01522 778661.

Another of our members, M. Jacques Piquet, wrote to me recently from France about material he is seeking:

<i>Amaryllis paradisiicola</i>	<i>Aristea capitata</i>
<i>Crinum baumii</i>	<i>Ammocharis tinneata</i>
<i>Cyrtanthus flammosus</i>	<i>Cyrtanthus erubescens</i>
<i>Gladiolus equitans</i>	<i>Haemanthus canaliculatus</i>
<i>Haemanthus graniticus</i>	<i>Ixia polystachia</i>
<i>Nerine platypetala</i>	<i>Scadoxus cyrtanthiflorus</i>
<i>Cybistes longifolius</i>	<i>Moraea alticola</i>
<i>Moraea ramossissima</i>	<i>Daubenya aurea aurea</i>
<i>Brunsvigia josephinae</i>	<i>Eucrosia bicolor</i>
<i>Worsleya raynerii</i>	

M. Piquet points out that he is 86 years old and, thus, is looking for flowering sized bulbs, as he hopes to see them flower. He does not have email, but can be contacted by mail at 4, La Peyroulette, 33690 Grignols, France, or by phone at 05 56 25 31 47.

### **Review of the Bulb and Seed Exchange**

**Bill Squires**

Firstly a very big THANK YOU to all our donors for their generosity and time taken to clean, package, label and post on to me; very time consuming, I know!

As always demand exceeded supply in many cases, but I tried to be as fair as possible so that everybody received some of the items they requested. One small gripe from me, would all members when sending their wish list ensure that a postal address is included; it save me having to find room for a A4 size file on an already crowded table of seed and bulb packets.

When Jeremy Spon sent his donation he included some interesting notes about *Freesia*'s which I think is interesting to anyone who grow these plants so I've copied them below.

As last year, I included in my contribution bulbs of several *Freesia*; I have acquired them under various names, which I give here, but have doubts about some. The new *Freesia* monograph says the axillary corms are diagnostic of *F. leichtlinii* ( which now includes the former *F. alba*, as subspecies *alba* ). Where I have suggested that a species may actually be *F. leichtlinii* it is because I have observed axillary corms; it may be the that plants with white flowers have become muddled up in cultivation, so I think some caution in naming is in order! I am also not totally convinced that either of the *F. sparmannii* is correctly named, although neither has shown any sign of producing axillary corms.

Dear Bill,

Further to our brief conversation on Sunday about Freesias, and specifically *F. leichtlinii*, I thought I would try and summarize my understanding of the latest position on this, as set out in Manning and Goldblatt's 2010 monograph of *Freesia*. However, it has not proved easy to distill what they say into a few words! The distinctions between some species are quite subtle, often relating to flower and leaf shape and orientation; if you have material of known wild origin, it should be reasonably straightforward to identify a plant, (distributions of most species do not overlap a great deal) but cultivated stocks, at least those I have grown, cannot always be keyed out with any great confidence. It may well be that most are hybrids, or that they do not develop in full all the characteristics of the plants in the wild.

Having said that, when it comes to plants that have been known variously as *alba*, *leichtlinii*, *muirei* and *refracta alba*, (not to be confused with *refracta*, a distinct and easily recognised species with greenish-yellow flowers marked with orange and purple,) these should all now be called *leichtlinii alba*. *Leichtlinii* is defined as a species with two subspecies, *leichtlinii*, with yellow flowers, and *alba*, with white flowers. However these two subspecies represent extreme ends of a spectrum, both in colour and geography; and subspecies *alba*, which occurs in the east of the species' range, can have varying degrees of yellow on the lower three petals (sorry, tepals!) The feature which unites both subspecies, and is not present in other closely allied species (*praecox*, *fergusoniae*, *fucata*, *caryophyllacea* and *marginata*,) is the occurrence of axillary corms - corms in the axils of the leaves where they join the underground part of the stem. This is in addition to the usual basal offsets. Manning and Goldblatt say these are 'always present', which I interpret as meaning every plant of *leichtlinii* has them. Whether there is any significance in the fact that they are not always present in all the plants I have raised from one batch of seed, but only some of them, I am not sure. This might just be due to the vigour or otherwise of the plants, or it might indicate hybridity.

What I can say is that corms I have obtained under the names *xanthospila* (a synonym of *caryophyllacea*) *sparrmanii* and *andersoniae* (both of which are species recognised by Manning and Goldblatt) have all developed axillary corms at one time or another. As they have all had scented white flowers with varying degrees of yellow markings, I am tending towards relabelling all as *leichtlinii alba*. Corms that I had from Terry Smale as *muirei* have the same characteristics, and as *muirei* is a synonym of *leichtlinii*, I have re-labelled these already. (One other point worth mentioning is that flower markings are not reliable identifiers - I have had plants where a single spike has had both pure white flowers, and ones with yellow markings on the lowest tepal!) As for the other species mentioned, the true *sparrmanii* has unscented white flowers, where the lower, narrow portion is as long as the upper, flared part - *leichtlinii* has a very short lower narrow portion in relation to the rest of the flower. *Andersoniae* has different bracts around the base of the flowers (thin-textured

and papery, rather than firm and bright green); and *caryophyllacea* (*xanthospila*) flowers in mid-winter.

What would help greatly in all this would be to know the ultimate origin of the corms circulating in cultivation. Whether it would ever be possible to find this out, however, I am not sure. When plants have been raised from AGS seed, or passed from person to person via exchanges, tracing them back to an original wild collection, if any, is probably impossible. And of course plants raised from seed from cultivated plants in mixed collections cannot be guaranteed not to be hybrids. Where all this leaves us in deciding what to call our scented white freesias is anybody's guess! And how much of all this information you wish to include in your notes I will have to leave you to decide.

Best wishes,

Jeremy

P.S. Many thanks to you and David for organising another excellent meeting

## **Bill's travelogue      Being a description of his 2012 trek in the Cape - continued**

### **Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> August**

Woke up this morning to howling winds and heavy rain so not likely to see many flowers open today. Luckily I moved on to Darling, but it was still raining when I arrived so the day was a complete washout ( no pun intended ).

### **Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> August**

Still very cloudy so I drove to Hopefield to see the Wild Flower Show on its last day. This is a rather unique show in that it not only displays the flowers of the district, but includes dry reeds, burnt bushes, dried flowers from previous years set out in 4 beds dressed out to make them look as the veld would naturally look in spring. There are 4 botanical areas around Hopefield: the sandveld, a deep layer of fine sand and not very fertile, the swartland, soil which developed from shale and is more fertile, the reedveld, also sandy but whereas the sandveld is alkaline this area is mainly acidic and the vleis (the fens) heavy clay and quite fertile.

So the show has a very wide array of flowers and shrubs on display and for every plant on show there is a display table with a single specimen of each with its latin name and local name.

### **Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> August**

Today I travelled around the Darling area visiting known flower sites and as the sun shone all day there was plenty to see including *Geissorhiza splendidissima*, a yellow *Geissorhiza* that I still have to identify plus a *Lachenalia longibractiata*, with blueish flowers and only 4 inches tall.

Waylands farm where I am staying is owned by John and Jeanette Duckett, the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of Duckett's to farm here since it was established in 1865. They grow the usual crops such as wheat, oats and barley. A stock of 1500 Merino sheep are kept on the farm plus a herd of Nguni cattle which is an indigenous breed that can survive and thrive on the local vegetation and are resistant to drought and tick borne diseases.

### **Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> August**

I moved on to Piketberg, but not much to see along the way because I was driving through grain growing country; the farmers spray weedkiller along the grass verges to stop anything contaminating the crop which in turn lowers the market value. There are laws prohibiting the spraying or even cutting the grass during the Spring flowering season but they appear to make no difference! I did see a small flock of Flamingo's, a first for me.

At Piketberg I went straight up the mountain to make the most of the brilliant sunshine (tomorrow is forecast as a dull day) and saw plenty of flowers, including several species of *Spiloxine*, *Sparaxis villosa*, *Romulea*, one of which was pure white. I also came across a dainty white *Oxalis*.

### **Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> August**

Today the weather forecast was cloudy all day and the flowers remained stubbornly closed. So, I decided to go to Velddrif on the West Coast: there I saw lots of *Sparaxis villosa*, *Lapeirousia jacquinii* and a form of *Lachenalia mutabilis* that I had never seen before. On my return I turned off to Aurora but again not a lot to see. In desperation I went along a road sign posted Kaptainskloof but again little to see. However, after a few stops bingo! I stumbled across the darkest *Lachenalia pustulata* I have ever seen, a mix of deep blue and red and growing with them a colony of *Lachenalia unifolia*. After a careful search I could find no hybrids so I now wonder why two species from the same Genus growing together do not hybridise, I can only surmise they have different pollinators!

### **Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> August**

Destination Clanwilliam. Another bright sunny day so decided to use the back roads from Piketsberg to Lamberts Bay along the R365. Saw lots of daisies in all colours, orange *Gazania*, yellow and white *Ursinia* and blue *Felicia*. *Lapeirousia jacquinii* and *L. mutabilis* in the form I know, with the electric blue sterile flowers at its tips.

### **Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> August**

It was cloudy all day, with a little rain and a very cold wind; I kept my cardigan on all day. I drove from Clanwilliam up through the Pakhuis pass and then down into the Biedouw Valley. Along the way I saw a large colony of *Lachenalia orchioides*, *Bulbine torta*, the blue form of *Gladiolus venustus*, a shrubby *Pelargonium magenteum*, with stunning red flowers, white *bulbinella cauda-felis* and a field full of *Homeria miniata*, a bulbous plant poisonous to any live-stock.

At the turn-off to the Biedouw Valley there is a solitary grave with a headstone surrounded by a fence, on the maps marked “Englishman’s Grave”. The headstone is engraved with:

“ In sacred and loving memory of Graham Unicombe Winchester Clowes,  
Lieutenant, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Gordon Highlanders; killed in action near this spot  
on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 1901.”

### **Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> September**

Very cloudy this morning so I decided to stay in the local area, realising there would be little to see. However, I came across another form of *Lachenalia mutabilis* with a short thick stem about 4” tall, the top 2/3 with blue sterile flowers, leaving just the bottom 1/3 with yellow flowers. The next gem I saw was a *Lapeirousia sp.* similar to *L. jacquinii*, but red rather than blue (but not the red of *L. silenoides*) so yet another puzzle!

As the sun broke through in the afternoon I travelled down the N7 and turned off for Algeria to cross the Olifants River and then follow the river back along to Clanwilliam. Due to the heavy rains the ford had water running over it and, after checking it out and finding just a couple of inches of water, I decided to cross. The first half was okay, but what I hadn’t noticed was the second half of the bridge was lower and therefore deeper and there was a much stronger current. Having started I had no option but to continue and I could feel the car constantly being pulled to one side. When I finally reached the other side I realised how lucky I had been, I have to admit for the first time in many years I was afraid.

*To be concluded in the next edition*

### **Some further thoughts on Bill’s travelogue**

**David Victor**

Bill and I visited Englishman’s Grave in 2011 and his article led me to do a little more research on the subject. Lieutenant Clowes was the grandson of William Clowes, the founder of the largest printers in the world in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. You can read more about the grave and the action in which he died at:

<http://www.andrewcusack.com/2010/04/14/engelsman-se-graf/>

He and his family lived at a house called Rosenberg in Hitchin, Herts. He was 21 years old when he died.

Also, having read Bill’s comments about crossing the Olifants River, I thought that Members would like to see this photograph, taken on 7<sup>th</sup> September this year. It is taken at the bridge that Bill talked about and shows Rod Saunders perching on one of the side posts of the bridge. In the background you can see a vehicle whose driver did not have the same degree of luck (or was it skill?) as Bill. I should add that the vehicle did not belong to Rod, he was just taking advantage of the situation.





**Southern African Bulb Group**  
**Income & Expenditure Account for year ending 30<sup>th</sup>**  
**September, 2013**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>(2012)</b>	<b>(2012)</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b><u>Income</u></b>				
Membership fees	20.00		47.46	
Catering	24.66		19.25	
Bulb Sales	242.90		108.00	
Book Commission	0.00		0.00	
Plant Sales	151.90		147.55	
Donations	10.00		3.00	
Admission donations	151.30		197.10	
Account Interest	0.11		0.11	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>£600.87</b>		<b>£522.47</b>
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>				
Hall Rental	175.00		76.44	
Speakers	0.00		50.00	
Catering Costs	8.67		16.47	
Bulb Distribution postage	90.27		43.58	
Stationery	0.00		16.63	
Printing	0.00		17.54	
Research Donation	99.67		0.00	
Affiliation Insurance	103.00		103.00	

<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£476.61</b>	<b>£356.71</b>
<b>Profit/Loss</b>	<b>£124.26</b>	<b>£165.76</b>

**Financial Position at 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2013**

<i>Balance Brought Forward</i>	1,270.75	1,001.99
Add Profit/Subtract Loss	124.26	268.76
Creditor - expenses due	0.00	0.00
<i>Balance Carried Forward</i>	<i>£1,395.01</i>	<i>£1,270.75</i>

**Represented by:**

Cheque not paid in	0.00	5.00
Treasurer's Savings A/c	1,395.01	1,265.75
	<b>£1,395.01</b>	<b>£1,270.75</b>

**Rodney Sims, Treasurer**

**A very happy Christmas and New Year from your Committee**

Chairman	Bill Squire	<a href="mailto:billsquire12@ntlworld.com">billsquire12@ntlworld.com</a>
Editor & speakers	David Victor	<a href="mailto:davidxvictor@btinternet.com">davidxvictor@btinternet.com</a>
Treasurer	Rodney Sims	<a href="mailto:rodney.sims@tiscali.co.uk">rodney.sims@tiscali.co.uk</a>
Secretary & Membership	Alina Hughes	<a href="mailto:abmhughes@gmail.com">abmhughes@gmail.com</a>
Web master	Richard White	<a href="mailto:r.j.white@cs.cf.ac.uk">r.j.white@cs.cf.ac.uk</a>
Hall Booking	Audrey Cain	<a href="mailto:audrey@cain.net">audrey@cain.net</a>
Seed & bulb exchange	Bill Squire	<a href="mailto:billsquire12@ntlworld.com">billsquire12@ntlworld.com</a>
	Alice Vanden Bon	<a href="mailto:alice.vanden.bon@ntlworld.com">alice.vanden.bon@ntlworld.com</a>



Bill and David meeting *Pelargonium adriaanii* near Port Nolloth, 2013