



Southern African Bulb Group

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SABG Newsletter no. 36 April 2018

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News

- ★ Audrey Cain will stand down from the Committee, but will continue to manage the Winchester meeting hall bookings.

Dates for your diary

- ★ Sunday 8th April 2018: SABG Spring Meeting, Winchester
- ★ Sunday 7th October 2018: SABG Autumn Meeting, Winchester
- ★ Saturday 13th October 2018: NAAS Nerine Visit Day, Exbury Gardens.

From the Editor

Please read the first notice.

Notices and Requests

Rod and Rachel Saunders

With great sadness I have to report that SABG members Rod and Rachel Saunders are missing, feared dead.

Both were British-born but emigrated to South Africa some 30 years ago, and lived in Cape Town. Many of you will know them by way of their business Silverhill Seeds in Kenilworth, South Africa. During a visit to the UK, they presented talks at the first of our meetings to be held in Winchester, on 18th May 2008. At this meeting Rod gave an illustrated and very informative talk on amaryllids, irids and other South African bulbs, followed by a wide-ranging discussion session, and Rachel gave a most interesting and diverting presentation on the wide variety of techniques they used while collecting seeds. I have included accounts of both their talks later in this newsletter, as they did not appear in our newsletters at the time.

Rachel was the Treasurer of IBSA, the Indigenous Bulb Association of South Africa. Some of us met them both again at the recent IBSA Symposium at Goudini Spa in the Western Cape, where they each chaired lecture sessions. No doubt they had also put much effort into the organisation of this excellent event. Indeed, their work for IBSA had previously been rewarded with honorary life memberships.

Bill Squire alerted me to the present situation. The facts, as far as I have been able to ascertain them from newspaper web sites, some of which can be found quoted online¹, are as follows.

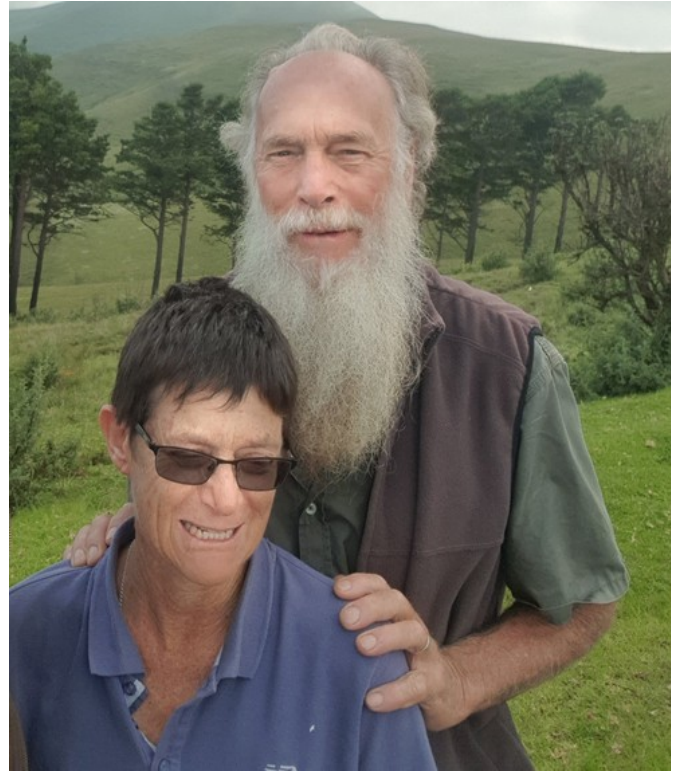
They went missing in February while on a tour of the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. They had spent three days filming in the Drakensberg with Robin Matthews of Big Banana Films who was assisting a BBC crew filming for the “Gardeners’ World” programme with presenter Nick Bailey. The following day, February 9th, Rachel Saunders sent Matthews a WhatsApp photo of a rare *Gladiolus* the couple had found at Bivane Dam near Vryheid in KwaZulu-Natal.

They were last seen in the Ngoye Forest Reserve near Mtunzini, 130 km north of Durban. It appears that they were kidnapped on February 12th or 13th. Their car has been found and evidence suggests that they may have been murdered. A large amount of money has been stolen from their bank accounts and purchases made using their credit cards.

After an intensive five-week manhunt, four suspects, alleged to be a terrorist cell, have been arrested and held in custody pending trial. The Saunders’ mobile phones have been recovered and may provide evidence. According to the Sunday Times (of South Africa) on 26th March, the fourth suspect was arrested near Durban and charged with their murder. He is also suspected of having disposed of their bodies, which have not been found.

I am sure you will all want to join me in expressing our sympathy and condolences to their family and friends and everyone who held them in high regard for their knowledge and work with our favourite plants. Personally I also feel outrage and contempt for the apparent motivation behind this crime. The best way to counter this evil is to continue to cherish and appreciate South Africa’s plants and its people, especially those who care about their conservation. Rod and Rachel’s spirit will live on.

Richard White



Rod and Rachel

[Photo from Twitter]

Request for hardiness experiences

Paul Cumbleton, who will be giving the main talk at the October meeting, says that he intends to include a section about hardiness (or lack of it). “I wonder how many of our members grow without heat under glass or even in the garden and what successes or failures they have had? To at least start to try and pool our knowledge, I have put together a simple questionnaire.”

The questionnaire is included at the end of this newsletter. Paul would prefer replies by email, so I suggest that you could do one of the following:

- Copy the questionnaire text and paste it into an email, add your comments, and email it to him,
- Download a copy in DOCX, ODT or PDF format from <https://sabg.tk/questionnaire/>, edit it and email it to him as an attachment, or
- if you don’t have email and are reading this newsletter on paper, detach the last page, fill in the questionnaire and post it to him at The Maples, Watts Quarry Lane, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7JD.

Please respond – the more who do, the more we’ll learn! Paul will pull all the replies together and feedback the results to you all during a talk at the autumn meeting this year.

¹ <http://nthe.news/search/rachel-saunders.html>

SABG Bulb and Seed Exchange

Planning for the 2018 Bulb and Seed Exchange is under way, and we will let you know the timetable in due course. Meanwhile, you might like to look at the report on the 2017 Exchange provided by Jon Evans later in this newsletter. After his report, you will also find his proposal for sharing “ephemeral” seeds which must be sown immediately and cannot be stored dry, and useful instructions from Jeremy Spon for making seed packets.

Membership list

The SABG Membership List is still being worked on and, in the light of the forthcoming General Data Protection Regulation, the Committee will discuss our information policy at the Committee meeting on 8th April and this will be communicated in the next Newsletter. In the mean time, I should say that we try to keep your information secure, and we do not sell or share it with Tracebook, Fritter or any other such organisation, whether on the Internet or not.

Of course, if you have any changes in your email address, phone number, and postal address, please let me or Alina Hughes know. Our email addresses are as usual at the end of this newsletter,

SABG meetings

As a tribute to the work of Rod and Rachel Saunders, I have included here reports on their talks at our meeting on 18th May 2008.

Rod Saunders on Amaryllids and Irids

Rod is one half on Silverhill Seeds, from whom many of us will have bought seeds. He began his talk by describing South Africa’s floral regions and showed a picture of *Amaryllis belladonna* on Lion’s Head, Cape Town. He went on to show photos and briefly describe many species of South African bulbs,

He showed slides of some species of the genus *Brunsvigia*, as well as other plants in the family Amaryllidaceae, followed by plants in the Iridaceae family and others of interest to members. It would take up too much space to describe them all, nor did I have time to write down all the interesting information he imparted, but nevertheless here is a list of many of the plants whose pictures he showed, and a few snippets of information that I was able to jot down, for brevity not always in complete sentences. (Sometimes I’ve added additional notes of my own in parentheses, like this.)

Amaryllidaceae

We began with *Brunsvigia comptonii*, and *B. marginata* flowering two or three years after a burn. The unique bright red flower of the latter is attractive to the Mountain Pride butterfly, *Aeropetes tulbaghia* (also called the Table Mountain Beauty) which he said is crazy about this shade of red; other plants it pollinates are the same shade of red, including *Nerine sarniensis* and the orchid *Disa uniflora*. *B. orientalis* was growing in very sandy very well-drained acid soil (about pH 5.5).

Haemanthus albiflos, which comes from the Cape Floral Kingdom and also further east in the southern coastal rainfall area, is a fine easy plant to grow. A photo of *H. coccineus* was taken just south of the Orange River, where some plants were already in seed. It can be found at a wide range of altitudes from zero at the sea-shore up to 2000m, and the leaf size is very variable. *H. canaliculatus* only flowers after a fire. *H. pubescens* subsp. *pubescens* was growing on the Saunders’ own property (presumably in Cape Town), but is also found after fire.

Hessea is a genus related to *Nerine*, and is rewarding to grow. *H. pilosula* in Namaqualand, *H. breviflora*, *H. monticola* among rocks.

Strumaria is also related to *Nerine*, and is often found in association with *Oxalis*. Most flower in April, *S. picta* in May. April to May is a good time to see amaryllids in flower. The tiny *S. tenella* is noticeable when in flower in “thousands” or even “millions”, he said. *S. truncata*, *S. watermeyeri*.

Gethyllis campanulata; the appropriately named *G. grandiflora* has waxy petals up to 75-100mm in length. It has very distinctive foliage, always fringed and twisted. It flowers in October to December “when only mad dogs and fools” are out looking for it, and the seed capsules later emerge from close to the ground just before rain. Rodents eat the capsules and discard the seeds, which are then well placed to germinate. This behaviour is not generally recorded in books.

Cyrtanthus is the only South African amaryllid without recalcitrant (or “ephemeral”) seed, in other words *Cyrtanthus* seeds can lie dormant in a dry state, whereas the others germinate immediately and do not survive drying out. They are often known as “fire lilies”. *C. stellatus* is the “Scarborough lily” and flowers after fire. Another species can come into flower in as little as ten days after a fire.

(For a complete list of genera in the Amaryllidaceae, see the Plant List².)

² <http://www.theplantlist.org/1.1/browse/A/Amaryllidaceae/>

Iridaceae

Now Rod moved on to some members of the Iris family Iridaceae, which Rod referred to as “irids”. (I remember Margaret Corina once telling me, possibly with an element of elaboration, that David Victor, who grew many plants of this family, once attempted to proposition her with the invitation “Come and see my irids!”)

Babiana ambigua is a small plant with relatively large flowers at ground level, found in the “Cape sand” areas after fire. *B. nana*, *B. dregei* with sharp-tipped leaves, in a fantastic Namaqualand landscape.

Irids are very palatable, so they have adaptations to counter the threat from herbivores. Some produce lots of little cormlets which can grow on and perpetuate the plant if its main corm gets eaten, and some grow in cracks in rocks where they can germinate and not be eaten by herbivores.

Babiana ringens, known as Rat’s Tail, has a stiff stalk which acts as a perch for sunbirds to land on and reach down to the flowers below for their nectar. (It was mentioned and illustrated in SABG Newsletter 34, March 2017³.) *B. thunbergii* (now named *B. hirsuta*), which grows close to the sea on the west coast, also has a stiff rat’s tail for sunbirds.

Dark centres, on the other hand, usually mean pollination by monkey beetles. *B. rubrocyanea* is known only from one small locality, and the yellowish *B. pygmaea* is found in just one 20 by 50m patch. *B. villosa* has beautiful red flowers. *B. truncata* (now *B. flabellifolia* and *B. cuneata*) is one of about four species whose leaves look as though they had been cut off by a pair of scissors, as does *B. bellidifolia*. *B. noctiflora*, a new species in a recent revision by John Manning, has pale yellow flowers. The colour of *B. patula* varies, but it is highly scented.

Geissorhiza corymbosa near Calvinia looks like a yellow crocus 25 to 30cm tall. There are two interesting evolutionary strategies in this genus: *G. darlingensis* in the Sandveld flowers later than the other species, in October, to benefit from late-flying pollinators. On the other hand, *G. inflexa* occurs in red and white flowered forms underneath burnt shrubs, just after fires in an area where burns happen every three years or so, when it probably receives increased light and nutrients, and less competition for these essentials.

Burnt areas are an important factor for many bulbs. On average an area is probably burnt every seven years, maybe every twelve years at sea level and not at all at high altitudes; Proteas grow in areas which burn every

fifteen to twenty years. Most burns occur between December and “early autumn” (presumably about March). They also allow porcupines to dig up bulbs. *Geissorhiza radians*, known as “wine cups”; *G. splendidissima* is a taller species; *G. tulbaghensis* is white; a second photo showed it in a mixed population with *Babiana stricta*, where *Lachenalia polyphylla* can also be found.

We saw pictures of many species of *Gladiolus*. *G. equitans* in Namaqualand is a species in the group with hooded flowers (the top petal curves forwards and downwards); *G. meliusculus* from further south is not as easy to distinguish as the photos suggest; *G. bullatus* is known as the “Caledon bluebell”. *G. cardinalis*, which is scarlet as the name implies, ought to be hardy enough to grow outdoors in the UK. *G. carmineus* at the coast near Hermanus in April, *G. debilis* in the same area, “small but charming”; *G. variegatus* is bigger, with red-spotted white petals.

Gladiolus floribundus is one of many species pollinated by long-tongued “proboscis” flies, which have tongues about 2” long and can drink nectar from flowers with deep tubes. Another *Gladiolus* species changes colour at about 3 p.m. and starts to emit a strong scent to attract night-flying moths. *G. nerinoides* often grows on cliffs hanging downwards (which must be awkward to grow in cultivation!) *G. rogersii*, growing in the southern Cape area; a different species, tiny but with an incredible scent; *G. virescens* near Hermanus is also highly scented.

Rod said that *Romulea* is a favourite genus of his. (It is related to *Crocus* which is more familiar to Europeans, although *Romulea* also grows in Europe, with one species, *R. columnae* the tiny Sand Crocus, which has a very restricted distribution in England.) We saw photos of a carpet of the pinkish-red *R. atrandra*; a group with long tubular flowers includes *R. albiflora* flowering in October. *R. hantamensis*, photographed near Calvinia with a dark spot on each petal, likes cold. (This plant appeared prominently in Newsletter 35, July 2017⁴, in an article describing an IBSA visit to the Hantamsberg in September 2014.) Rod told a story about staying well clear of a radio mast from which icicles were falling (this might possibly be the same mast in the Akkerendam nature reserve outside Calvinia which Bill and I visited in September 2017, with no sign of ice!)

R. hallii flowers later than most, from late July to early August. It is found in a small area near Sutherland. In fact Rod described the Roggeveld area from Middelpoort to Sutherland as the “true bulb centre of the country” (despite the fact that Nieuwoudtville further north advertises itself as the “bulb capital of the world”, no

3 <https://sabg.tk/newsletter/SABGnews34.pdf>

4 <https://sabg.tk/newsletter/SABGnews35.pdf>

less). Other species include *R. sabulosa* which can produce sheets of red flowers, with occasional pink hesperanthas, and *R. unifolia* which produces a single leaf and a magnificent large flower up to 3" across, but is not easy to grow in cultivation.

Hesperantha vaginata is night pollinated (the generic name means "evening flower"): the flowers open in still sunny conditions at about 3 p.m. and are pollinated at night. *H. humilis* (pink form) with *Romulea tortuosa*; another species which might have been *H. laticola*.

Plants in other irid genera includes *Tritonia karoocica* in or near Middelpos; *T. florentiae* with larger flowers; *Lapeirousia oreogena* with purple flowers (illustrated below), *L. plicata*, *L. silenoides* in Namaqualand; *Moraea barnardiella* (or *Galaxia barnardii*, as it is one of a group previously classified as *Galaxia*) near Franschoek (east of Cape Town), *M. versicolor* (also a *Galaxia*), *M. falcifolia* and *M. macronyx*.

(For a complete list of genera in the Iridaceae, see the Plant List⁵.)



Lapeirousia oreogena, Nieuwoudtville Wild Flower Reserve, 4/9/2017 [Richard White]

Other bulb families

Rod also illustrated a few bulbs from other families, including Lachenalias -- do you pronounce the name

with a "k" or a "sh", he asked? (I've also heard it pronounced with a "tch".) They are classified in the family Asparagaceae, in a group sometimes distinguished as the Hyacinthaceae. Species shown included *Lachenalia congesta* with broad leaves at ground level and *L. unicolor* in the Cederberg near Clanwilliam. Like many Lachenalias, it's shorter in the wild than in cultivation because of the sun. Other species were *L. violacea*, *L. viridiflora* which flowers early at the end of July, has unique blue-green flowers and is easy to grow, and *L. zebrina* which has attractively striped leaves. The genus *Polyxena* is now included in Lachenalia, and Rod showed *L. maughanii* and *L. ensifolia*.

At this point, Rod showed a number of what he called "dwarf bulbs", most of which I've moved to their appropriate place in their families, but one family not included elsewhere is the Colchicaceae, containing the strange-looking *Androcymbium pulchrum* (also known as *A. latifolium* and, I think, *A. coloratum*, see the photo below) which has two leaves and flowers in a cup made by two reddish bracts at ground level. According to some, based on molecular evidence and the fact that the ovaries remain underground, the genus should be lumped into *Colchicum*, which is a bit hard to swallow. (Yes, I know that some species are toxic. No pun intended.)



Androcymbium coloratum NW of Middelpos, 2/9/2017 [Richard White]

Next came the family Asphodelaceae (which must apparently now be called Xanthorrhoeaceae, for rather complicated and contentious reasons, since the inclusion of the Australian genus *Xanthorrhoea*, which are presumably no longer called "blackboys" as they were when I lived there). Rod mentioned *Bulbine capensis* with yellow flowers; he said there was another *Bulbine* with red flowers, quite well established in cultivation, which also has a yellow form – but the nearest thing I can find to this is *B. frutescens* with orange flowers. Neither species has a real bulb. The related genus *Bulbinella* is tall, looking like the fox-tail

5 <http://www.theplantlist.org/1.1/browse/A/Iridaceae/>

lily *Eremurus* (which is in the same family), and the photos included *B. latifolia*, *B. latifolia* subsp. *doleritica*, *B. elegans* which deserves to be more widely grown, *B. nutans* and a white form of this species near Cape Town.

Questions on cultivation

At the end of his talk, Rod answered some questions from the audience, starting with one about growing *Lapeirousia* from seed, which can be difficult to germinate: water the pot and put it in the fridge for a while. “Smoke water” was suggested, which apparently contains gibberellins; someone mentioned the “Kirstenbosch Instant Smoke Plus Seed Primer” which could be obtained from suppliers on eBay (but doesn't seem to be available now; there was more about this topic in an article on “Liquid Smoke” in the SABG Newsletter 31, August 2015⁶.) *Romulea*: most are easy to germinate, a few are more difficult and need fluctuating temperatures to germinate. Sow *Proteas* in early spring so as not to lose them the following winter.

Why does fire trigger flowering? If the vegetation is removed, the bare soil gets hotter during the day and colder at night: this temperature range might help stimulate growth, and the smoke is thought to trigger seed germination. Probably a combination of factors triggers flowering.

In cultivation, it is often noticed that the effort of flowering can kill off some bulbs, especially *Sparaxis*, *Ixia* and some other irids, so collect your own seeds to keep them going. *Gladiolus* sometimes flower two or three times and then stop flowering for a year or two, then recover.

Hardiness of *Nerines* in the UK: They don't like wet soil when it's very cold - if it's freezing, they need to be dormant in bone-dry soil. Mick said they don't like several consecutive days of frost. (*Nerine bowdenii* is hardier than *N. sarniensis* and the others, of course.)

Gethyllis like a soaking on a hot day during their dormant period. The seed capsules form below ground and they emerge later.

Question about lanky growth: if using artificial light, a lot of UV is needed. Perhaps artificial light encourages them upwards (perhaps because it's always positioned overhead, unlike the sun?) It's probably difficult to provide enough artificial light to make any difference.

Richard White

Rachel Saunders on seed collection

After lunch, Rachel, who is of course the other half of Silverhill Seeds, told us about her seed-collecting expeditions with Rod, and some of the experiences they had on the way. She said that people always ask how they live while they are travelling around Southern Africa collecting seeds, so here are some of the answers, together with some further information Rachel gave out in response to questions from the audience.

Most of their collecting is done in the south-western Cape area, but they make trips away for any length of time from one day to four or five weeks, sometimes visiting the neighbouring countries around South Africa. The photographs she showed covered a long period of time, chosen to show where they go and what they do. We started by looking at the process of packing their car, which is a four-wheel-drive vehicle, necessary because the minor roads are sometimes washed away or covered in rocks. Everything in the picture would be fitted in somehow (except for the cat!) They take **two** spare tyres, not just one, and they have a second fuel tank, so they can travel 1600 km on one filling. Other items included water containers, dried food, a tool box, a bucket (explained below) and a spade (for digging the car out of sand or mud, not for digging up plants!)

They sleep in a small tent, which has a sewn-in mosquito net. Frequently they pitch the tent on the top of the vehicle, which she said was for protection from animals and dust, but a picture of flooded tents suggested another possible reason. They sometimes walk for up to five days away from the vehicle. Sometimes they don't need a tent, and often sleep under a tree, as we saw for example in northern Namibia, where the border area adjoining Angola is now open again. However, pictures of a frozen waterfall and snow surrounding their car in the Drakensberg reminded us that South Africa is not always as warm as the word “Africa” might suggest, so plenty of warm clothes, sleeping bags and bedding are often necessary, although it's usually hot around lunch-time even in winter. They manage to shower every day, using the bucket with a watering-can rose ingeniously fixed underneath, unless it's very cold.

They try to eat healthily with lots of vegetables, and there is a fridge in the car which is useful for food such as fish bought in towns. It's easy to buy fresh vegetables from vendors at the side of the road. In Zambia you can even buy mice to eat, although she didn't say whether they actually ate any.

The process of the seed collection was introduced with a picture of Rod up a tree: they collect seeds of anything – trees, shrubs, grasses etc., as well as bulbous

plants. They take a long-handled pruner for the more awkwardly positioned tree and shrub seeds, and an umbrella is also useful: upturned, it can catch seeds as they strip open pods. They also have a vacuum cleaner, which like the fridge runs off a second car battery. The vacuum cleaner is for collecting annual seeds such as *Gazania*s, and is much quicker than doing it by hand! Sometimes, however, one does have to crawl around laboriously collecting individual pods and seeds by hand. One photo showed Rod with *Harpagophytum procumbens*, the “Devil’s Claws” plant, stuck all over him! (It is an important medicinal plant with a wide variety of traditional uses. See the SANBI web-site⁷ if you want to know more.)

Additional seed-collecting equipment included bags made from net-curtain material or old stockings for enclosing plants with explosive seed pods. Sometimes they leave these on for up to three weeks, until the seeds have ripened. On one occasion mice ate the seeds – they knew it was mice because one was still in the bag!

They write labels for the seeds, with the exact locality of collection, as they go along. They bring some books with them for reference. Seeds are cleaned as far as possible, using various techniques. Some can be sieved. *Acacia* pods need to be jumped on to break them open! Fleshy pods are put into cloth bags to dry on the front of the car while driving. Insects are a problem when travelling, as they inevitably get collected along with the seeds, so they treat the seeds with an insecticide as soon as they are collected.

Sometimes they take cuttings, and post them home if they are on a long trip. They rarely dig up plants. South Africa has very good laws on plant collecting and export, but they are seldom enforced. A partner of theirs runs a tissue-culture laboratory, which can be useful for bulking up plants quickly, used a lot for Aloes.

We saw photos of a carnivorous plant (*Roridula gorgonias*), annuals on the coast north of Cape Town, and *Hesperantha humilis*, which can be flowered in the first year after sowing.

Various hazards confront the seed-collectors. A photo showed them crossing a river in flood in Swaziland. Once they were stuck for three days on the other side of a river from their car! Puff-adders can be very cryptic, and often lie lazily in the middle of the road. Bees and wasps may lurk in clumps of seeds. Other animals encountered included tortoises, and one day an ostrich followed them all day. Rod once found a chameleon in his beard, but unfortunately there was no photo.

In agricultural areas most bulbs are found along

roadsides, which are sometimes sprayed by the roads department. Weed species may also spread along roadsides - *Acacias* are invasive and prevent plants such as bulbs growing underneath them. A photo showed Paterson’s Curse (*Echium plantagineum*) invading a roadside. (I first met this plant in Australia, where it is also an introduced pest. Although called Paterson’s Curse in New South Wales, where it reduces the quality of grazing for cattle, in South Australia it is called Salvation Jane because the climate there is drier and it’s the only plant which cattle can find to eat in some areas!)

A photo showed the effects of fire in fynbos vegetation. Rod and Rachel keep notes on areas affected by fires, so that they can return later on to collect seeds. *Protea* and *Leucodendron* seeds are released from their pods immediately after the fire, whereas some plants such as *Oxalis* come into flower a few weeks after a fire. Then most bulbs take four to six weeks from flowering to seed collection.

A photo showed *Haemanthus coccineus* after a fire. Plants which flower after fires include *Ornithogalum thyrsoides* (the Chinchinchee), *Watsonia* and *Senecio* species, *Aristea biflora*, the endangered *A. lugens*, which only ever flowers after a fire, *Moraea villosa*, *M. insolens*, *M. lurida* only flowers after fire (in the wild), *Anemone tenuifolia* and *Amaryllis belladonna* after a fire (the same plant Rod showed at the start of his talk).

At the time of the meeting, Rod and Rachel had only returned a week and a half earlier from a four-week trip to Namibia. We saw pictures of *Welwitschia* near Swakopmund, where it may get no rain at all in some years, but it can survive on the fog or sea-mist which we saw rolling in, with a *Sarcocaulon* also collecting the dew. It can be very wetting. Succulents photographed in Namibia included *Moringa* (a tree with a succulent stem, said to have many health benefits), *Adenium*, *Aloe asperifolia* with horizontal flower spikes, *A. littoralis*, *A. dichotoma* (now *Aloidendron dichotomum*), *A. viridiflora* with green flowers on a stem six feet high, *Cyphostemma* and a female *Welwitschia* with cones, revealing its relationship with conifers. *Hoodia*, which is apparently useful as an appetite reducer, has been sold off by farmers and is now virtually extinct in the wild. *Commiphora*, from which myrrh is extracted, can be a very low and wide-spreading shrub, growing over huge rocks. It is a very popular plant and the seeds can be sold for a price which helps to pay for the trip.

The talk finished with two alternative ways to finish a long collecting trip: a beer in a pool at the end of the day, or fishing at sunset.

Richard White

7 <http://pza.sanbi.org/harpagophytum-procumbens>

The next SABG meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Sunday 8th April 2018** at our normal venue, the Badger Farm Community Centre near Winchester. Directions are shown on our web-site at www.sabg.tk/meetings.html. The doors will open at 10.00, and the meeting will close at about 16.00.

The speaker for the morning session at approximately 11:00 will be our own member George Elder from Cardiff, who will talk about “*Winter-growing bulbs in cultivation and in the wild*”.

As usual, there will be a display table for any plants that you bring along. We plan to have one of our informal discussion periods during the afternoon, so that members can point out their plants and answer any questions. If you have any slides or computer images 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 the usual 80:20 basis, i.e. the Group takes a 20% commission to help cover the hall hire costs etc. Please include a second label in each pot, showing the price and your initials, so that we can settle up easily at the end of the day.

There will be a lunch break from approximately 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 stay in the hall and have the opportunity to chat to others and pore over the display and sales plants. Alternatively, the Sainsbury's supermarket is based on the same site.

As usual, the charge for the meeting will be £3.00 per person, payable on entry. There is no charge for parking, provided that you remember to add your car registration number to the list, usually in the main entrance hall and on the table just inside the entrance to our meeting room, to avoid any fine for over-staying.

SABG Autumn 2018 meeting

The Autumn meeting will be on **Sunday 7th October 2018**, also at the Badger Farm Community Centre. Paul Cumbleton will talk on “*Growing and propagating South African winter-growing bulbs*”.

2017 SABG Bulb and Seed Exchange

In the 2017 SABG Bulb and Seed Exchange we received 453 items from 23 donors.

In the main exchange about 1040 packets were sent out

in parcels to 47 members. After the main distribution a supplementary list of surplus material was sent out, and a further 300 packets were sent out to 13 members. All the UK members who were not donors made a donation to the group to cover postage and packing, and the exercise made a profit for the group, which was welcome but not intended.

When I took over the exchange from Bill I wasn't sure what to expect, or how much work it would prove to be. I thought the first stage, receiving and cataloguing donations, would be straightforward. My catalogue contains the following information for each item:

- Genus
- Species (including subspecies / cultivar name where relevant)
- Source (when the item is derived from wild-collected material it is useful to know a location for the collection)
- Notes (any information about the item you feel is useful)
- Donor's name
- Seed or Bulb
- South African or 'Other'
- Approximate quantity (for bulbs and large seeds)

A few donors sent me a list electronically – that was extremely useful and I would like to encourage it. Most others sent me a paper list which I transcribed with occasional errors; in some cases I had to copy the information from the individual packets.

However, I found I needed to go through each packet received (except for fine seed), cleaning and counting the contents (very few donors supplied information on quantity). Roughly half the packets I received contained bulb husks, dead roots, grit and sand etc., and in some cases seeds were still in seed pods. This took me a lot of time over a couple of months and I apologise if not all the items I sent out were cleaned perfectly. I would ask all donors to consider that if they don't clean items, I have to.

In a couple of cases packets weren't properly sealed and bulbs (fortunately not seed) got loose within the outer packaging; I think I repatriated these correctly, but if the source is not obvious I have to discard them. I recommend the use of glassine envelopes for seed, and manilla 'dinner money' gummed envelopes for bulbs (or paper bags rolled down and sealed for larger ones); all the problems were with reused postal envelopes sealed with Sellotape. One member made his own envelopes from folded paper which worked very well – instructions for these follow below in this newsletter.

I am not aware that any of the items sent out contained mealy bug. This parasite is becoming more of a problem in bulb collections, particularly the larger amaryllids (but also e.g. some Hyacinthaceae) since they descend deep between the scales of the bulb where they cannot be seen, and the only chemical which provided effective control of them there (imidacloprid - Provado Vine Weevil Killer) has now been banned because of its effect on the bee population. However, I have spoken to a couple of members who no longer participate in the exchange because they have in the past received material with mealy bug, and I would urge donors not to send in anything which might be infected with them, or virused, or diseased in any other way.

Having compiled and emailed out the list of items, I spent the following two weeks collecting requests, followed by a hectic 2-3 days packeting items and making up orders. We try to divide the material available equally between the people who request it, so none of the items can be split into packets until all the requests are in. Inevitably some items are in very short supply, and others are in high demand (sometimes both). When this happens precedence is given to donors, and then to requests in the order in which they are received, recognising that posted requests will arrive at least a day later than email requests sent at the same time. Many other items are only requested by one or two members, and about 100 were not requested at all in the first exchange (hence the surplus list – I don't have the space to plant and grow on surplus material!)

The items most requested are listed below.

Genus	Species	Number	Requests
<i>Daubenyia</i>	<i>zeyheri</i>	6	16
<i>Massonia</i>	<i>citrina</i>	74	14
<i>Daubenyia</i>	<i>stylosa</i>	18	13
<i>Daubenyia</i>	<i>comata</i>	56	12
<i>Massonia</i>	<i>longipes</i> (purple leaf)	4	12
<i>Cyrtanthus</i>	<i>smithiae</i>	1	10
<i>Gethyllis</i>	<i>roggeveldensis</i> × <i>villosa</i>	25	10
<i>Gethyllis</i>	<i>verticillata</i>	17	10
<i>Rhodophiala</i>	<i>bagnoldii</i>	3	10
<i>Gladiolus</i>	<i>stephaniae</i>	7	9
<i>Strumaria</i>	<i>karooica</i>	11	9
<i>Strumaria</i>	<i>truncata</i>	4	9

In summary, there were a few teething problems, and I have noted a few things I can do better next time, but overall, the exchange seems to have been a success, and I have agreed to run it again next year. The selection of material on the list was excellent this year, and I would like to thank all the donors; certainly the vast majority of members requesting material were pleased with what they received. The early submission date caused issues for a few donors, but it helped us manage to get bulbs out by early September so they could be planted and back into growth at the right time.

Ephemeral seeds

Seed from some highly desirable species of bulbs, mainly amaryllids, germinates immediately regardless of treatment, and thus cannot be kept for the main exchange. If it is sent from South Africa, it is usually growing in the packet. Such seed ripens mainly in a period of at most 2-3 months in the autumn; a few such items were included this year in the surplus list.

I have had a couple of enquiries about the possibility of running an exchange for such seed which I am going to term “ephemeral”, though this is not the normal meaning of the word. The Pacific Bulb Society website uses the term “recalcitrant” which may be the correct botanical term, but brings to mind seed which doesn't want to germinate rather than the reverse. I am happy to receive packets of such seed, and will send out an email immediately, with a short time window for requests; initially I propose to send these to all the membership, but if they become frequent I will ask people to opt in to this ‘ephemeral seed exchange’ service.

Jon Evans

Home-made seed packets

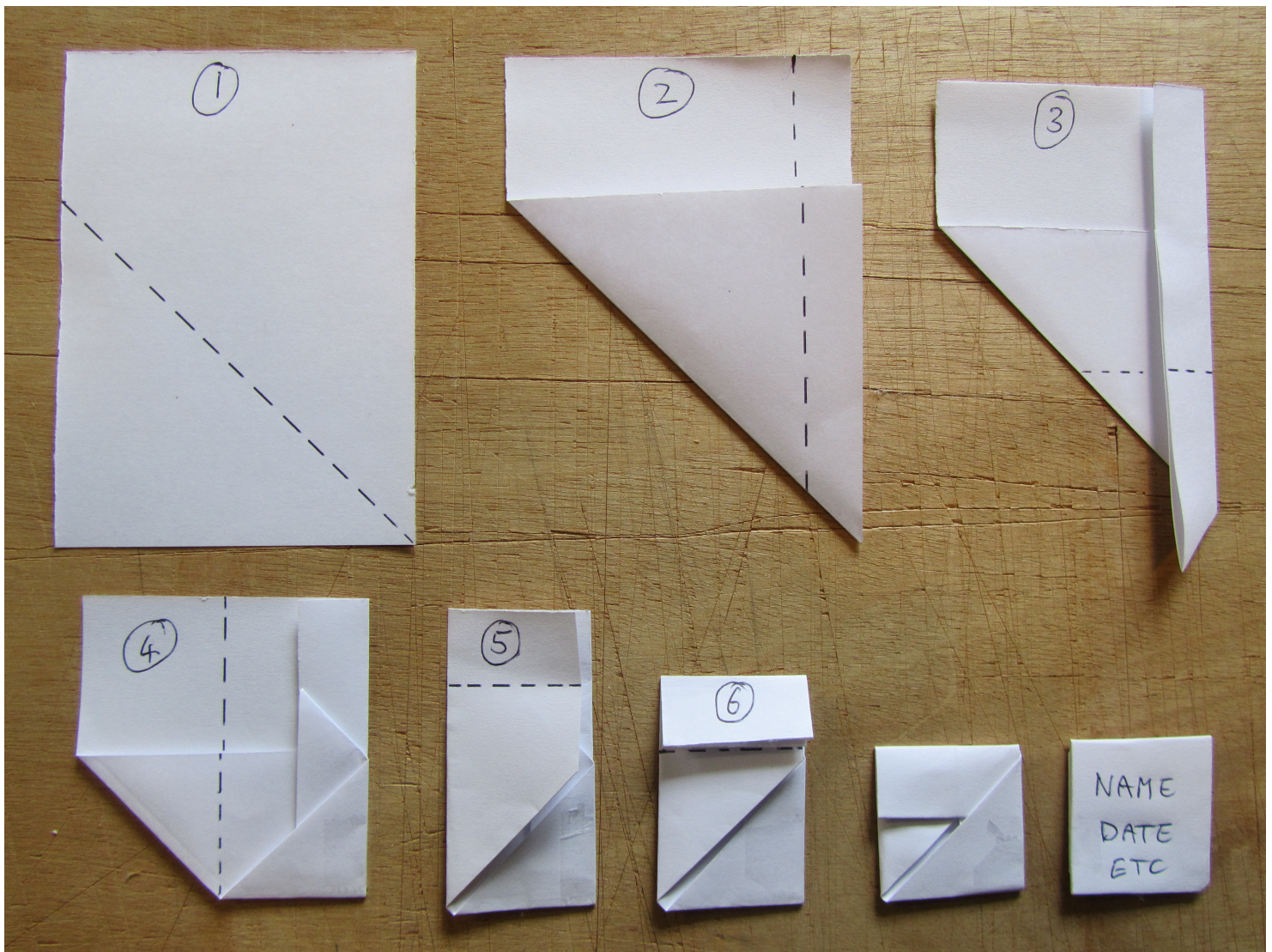
This “origami” method of making seed packets works with any piece of paper with the proportions of width to height of roughly 2:3. The actual size of the paper simply determines the final size of the seed packet, and any paper can be used, even newspaper, although for robustness, and clear space to write on, printer paper is best – I save scrap paper which has print on one side only, and make sure that the printed side ends up on the inside of the packet. The advantage of making your own seed packets in this way, apart from the saving in cost if you recycle scrap paper, is that there are no holes in the corners from which small seed can escape, which is often the case with bought items like wage envelopes, or even some of the glassine packets used in seed distributions, if they are not sealed correctly. The packets are practically self-sealing providing the flap that is tucked under in the last step is wide enough,

although for extra security I usually sellotape across the point where the flap goes under (in addition to the sellotape recommended between stage 3 and 4.)

The photo shows the stages to follow – the dotted line on each stage is where the next fold is made. After making the fold shown in stage 3, giving the shape shown in stage 4, wrap a small piece of sellotape round the bottom right side to secure the fold you have just made – this will ensure the packet does not come undone when you tuck the flap under in the final stage. (This is not absolutely essential. I have brought seed home from holidays in packets made from pages torn out of notebooks while out in the countryside where I obviously did not have any sellotape to hand. It just makes the packet that much more secure.)

Make sure you start with a piece of paper which is at least 1 ½ times as high as wide – one slightly higher than this is even better, as the flap that is tucked in in the final step will be wider and therefore a tighter fit. But A4 paper is about the right proportions; one sheet of this gives you quite a large packet, or it can be cut into four smaller sheets of the same proportions. A few trial folds will soon give you a feel for what sizes of paper work best for the seed (or indeed small bulbs) which you have. Once you have tucked the flap in, turn the packet over and you have a clear space in which to write name, date etc.

Jeremy Spon



SABG Income and Expenditure Account for year ending 30th September 2017

	2017	2016
Income		
Membership Fees	£42.75	£60.83
Catering	£28.87	£32.04
Bulb Sales 2016	£418.73	£278.00
Book Commission	£246.75	
Plant Sales	£186.65	£71.10
Bulb sales 2017	£355.12	£0.02
Admission Donations	£182.00	£192.00
Account Interest	£4.35	£4.45
Total Income	£1,465.22	£638.44
Expenditure		
Hall Rental	£164.50	£154.00
Speakers	£215.00	£250.00
Catering Costs		£11.15
Bulb Distribution Postage	£149.26	£108.55
Stationery		£8.48
Printing	£174.00	
Repay Creditors	£248.61	
Postage		£28.90
Web site	£107.79	
Affiliation Insurance	£105.00	£105.00
Commission refund	£8.60	
Total Expenditure	£1,172.76	£666.08
Profit/Loss	£292.46	-£27.64

Financial Position at 30 September 2017

	2017	2016
Balance Brought Forward	£2,030.49	£1,809.52
Add Profit/Subtract Loss	£292.46	-£27.64
Creditor- expenses due	£347.60	£248.61
Balance Carried Forward	£2,670.55	£2,030.49
Represented By		
Cash in Hand	£97.46	
Cheque not paid in		£5.00
Treasurer's Savings Account	£2,350.97	£2,025.49
Paypal Account	£222.12	
	£2,670.55	

I hereby certify that I have duly examined the books, bank statements, vouchers etc. of the Southern African Bulb Group and confirm these represent a true and accurate record.

Signed

David Wilson MBA

SABG Committee**Chairman**

Bill Squire billsquire@sky.com

Vice-chairman, Seed & bulb exchange

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Treasurer

Rodney Sims rodney.sims@tiscali.co.uk

Secretary & Membership

Alina Hughes abmhughes@gmail.com

Newsletter & Web editor, Committee minutes

Richard White sabg@rjwhite.tk

Meeting supplies

Sue Bedwell bedwell615@btinternet.com

South African Bulbs: Hardiness Questionnaire

I am investigating to what extent our bulbs can be grown without heat under glass or even out in the garden. Please could I ask as many of you as possible to answer the questions below and email me back the completed form to cumbleton@yahoo.co.uk Many thanks!

Your Name:

and location:

Section A: Plants in Greenhouses

1. Do you grow any South African bulbs in a greenhouse with no heating?

Yes / No

(delete as appropriate, and if No, go to section B)

If yes, please list the plants here (genus, species and provenance if available): (Continue at the end of this document if you don't have enough space here)

2. Do you cover them with fleece or similar on cold nights? Yes / No

3. What is the lowest temperature they have survived? :

4. Have they experienced a *sustained* period of frost and still survived? Yes/No

5. Please list any plants you have tried but which did **not** survive in unheated conditions:

Section B: Plants in the Open Garden

1. Do you grow any South African bulbs in the garden without any protection? Yes / No

If yes, please list the plants here (genus, species and provenance if available): (Continue at the end of this document if you don't have enough space here):

2. What is the lowest temperature they have survived? :

3. Have they experienced a *sustained* period of frost and still survived? Yes/No

4. Please list any plants you have tried in the garden but which did not survive:

5. Please add any other comments or observations on hardiness that you think may be helpful: