



Southern African Bulb Group

www.sabg.tk

SABG Newsletter no. 39 April 2019

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News

★ This newsletter salutes Bill Squire, “plantsman extraordinaire”, who died in October 2018

Dates for your diary

- ★ Sunday 7th April 2019: SABG Spring Meeting, Winchester
- ★ Sunday 6th October 2019: SABG Autumn Meeting, Winchester
- ★ Saturday 12th October 2019: NAAS Nerine Visit Day, Exbury Gardens (SABG members welcome)

From the Editor

Please accept my apologies, again, for the delay in the publication of this newsletter.

Bill Squire

Most of you will already know, but perhaps a few of our members without email access might not have heard, the sad news that Bill Squire, our long-serving former Chairman, died on Friday 26th October 2018. Just four weeks after moving to Thailand to start a new life with his partner, he succumbed to a short but fatal illness. I am sure you will join with me in expressing our condolences and heart-felt sympathy to his family, including his sons Leo and Simon, and to his fiancée in Thailand. He will be sorely missed.

He was one of the SABG's most stalwart and knowledgeable supporters. He was also well known as the former Chairman of the Dorset Group of the Alpine Garden Society, long-standing Show Secretary for the Alpine Garden Society's Wimborne Show, the custodian of the National Collection of *Lachenalia*, and a member of the NAAS and the SRGC.

Some pictures of Bill and other information can be found on the SABG web-site¹ and on Leo Squire's Facebook page², amongst other personal information. But to us his legacy will be his inspiration and the enthusiasm and knowledge which he imparted to us.



Bill's travels

Bill visited South Africa for several weeks each year. Many readers of this Newsletter will know him better than I did, but I shall always remember spending time with him in South Africa during the last IBSA Convention and afterwards at the Middelpoos Hotel.

The picture of Bill on the right was taken in the Komsberg near Middelpoos on 1st September 2017. The magenta flowers carpeting the ground are *Romulea komsbergensis*.

He gave me lots of practical advice on various subjects, including how to spot good locations for bulbs, the best brands of beer at the Hotel, and more prosaically "Don't

be surprised if you are stopped at a police check-point on the N1", while driving from Goudini Spa to Matjiesfontein – we were indeed both stopped! By a very polite and friendly policewoman, I should add.



Bill's plants

Bill's plants and some of his books have already found good homes. His *Lachenalia* collection is now housed at Exbury Gardens in the care of Theo Herselman and Nicolas de Rothschild. His *Gladiolus* and *Nerine* plants were bought by Dorset AGS members. His other South African bulbs are now in the care of Joseph Atkin, head gardener at Aberglasney Gardens in Carmarthenshire.

A display of just a tiny fraction of Bill Squire's plants was presented by Leo Squire and Tony Bennett at the meeting of the Dorset Group of the Alpine Garden Society, of which Bill had been Chairman, on the 1st November, 2018. A small but appropriate tribute to a wonderful man. A photograph of this display appears at the end of this Newsletter.

1 <https://sabg.tk/people/billsquire:start>

2 <https://www.facebook.com/leo.squire>



On the previous page I have included photographs of Bill's *Lachenalia* collection in his own greenhouse [Photo by Jeremy Spon, 7 April 2018] and after transfer to Exbury Gardens, where it was viewed by members of SABG, NAAS and AGS during the *Lachenalia* Day on 23rd March.

There is a short piece about *Lachenalias* and Bill Squire, in the context of the *Lachenalia* exhibition held annually at Exbury Gardens, in the Plant Heritage blog³.

Bill's books

His alpine plant books are being distributed to members of the Dorset AGS and visitors to their shows, his books on cacti and succulents are being offered to members of the Southampton branch of the BCSS, and some of his South African books are available for sale to SABG members. The proceeds from all these sales are going to the Dorset AGS group, which is considering an appropriate way to use the money in his memory, possibly to provide funds for a "Bill Squire Lecture" with a prominent speaker each year.

The list includes the title, author, date and other publication details, followed in square brackets by a representative current price I have found online, and finally a suggested price for sale at the meeting, 20% of which will go to the SABG and 80% will go to the Dorset AGS fund (except for three books of mine which I've added to the list, and any other books which are offered for sale at the meeting).

- "*The Genus Watsonia*" by Peter Goldblatt, 1989, 148pp. (52 spp.) [Amazon £38.00] £30.00
- "*Systematics and biology of the Cape genus Sparaxis*" by Peter Goldblatt & John Manning, in *Strelitzia* vol. 32, 2013, 75pp. (16 spp.) [NHBS £9.99] £7.00
- "*Systematics and biology of Lapeirousia, Codonorhiza, Psilosiphon & Schizorhiza*" by Peter Goldblatt & John Manning, in *Strelitzia* vol. 35, 2015, 146pp. (46 spp.) [NHBS £19.99] £15.00
- "*Dierama: The Hairbells of Africa*" by OM Hilliard & BL Burtt, 1991, 152pp. (44 spp.) [AbeBooks £30.70] £22.00
- "*Grow Clivias*" by Graham Duncan, 3rd ed., 2002, 45pp. (Kirstenbosch Gardening Series) £3.00
- "*Namaqualand: A Succulent Desert*" by Richard Cowling & Shirley Pierce, 1999,

156pp. [Amazon £25] £18.00

- "*Namaqualand: Garden of the Gods*" by Freeman Patterson, 1984 (3rd impression, 1998), 128pp. [Amazon £5.00 incl. p&p] £4.00
- "*Wild Flowers of South Africa*" by JP Rourke, 1996 (2nd ed.), 127pp. [Amazon £2.38 incl. p&p] £2.00
- "*Namaqualand and Clanwilliam*" by le Roux & Schelpe, 1981 (2nd impression, 1984), 173pp. (South African Wild Flower Guide 1, 1st edition – there is a later edition) [AbeBooks £7.99] £5.00
- "*Outeniqua, Tsitsikamma & Eastern Little Karoo*" by Audrey Moriarty, 1982, 206pp. (South African Wild Flower Guide 2, 1st edition – there is a later edition) [AbeBooks £5.90] £4.00
- "*Hottentots Holland to Hermanus*" by Lee Burman & Anne Bean, 1985, 219pp. (South African Wild Flower Guide 5, hardback) [Amazon £10.00 excl. p&p] £8.00

If any of these books remain unsold at the end of the meeting, I will let members know by email, in which case they can be posted.

Notices and Requests

Lost gilet

Alina Hughes emailed me after the last meeting in October to say that as we were clearing up at the end of the meeting, she found and took charge of a gentleman's gilet (which I take to be a padded sleeveless jacket like a waist-coat, not one of the *gilets jaunes* which have been in the news of late!) which had been left behind on the back of a chair which appeared to be on the right side of the room (looking at the screen). She has emailed some possible owners with little response. The item is black and orange and a size XXL. Please email her if you are the owner or have any information about it.

Plants wanted

Also from Alina is this request: "I recently lost a *Haemanthus humilis* subsp. *hirsutus* (summer growing) which I bought from Audrey Cain in 2009. I cannot find a replacement and was wondering if any of our members would have one they can spare (at a price, of course)." (Of course, this sort of thing is also why a lot of members eagerly await each summer's Bulb & Seed Exchange!)

3 <https://plantheritage.wordpress.com/2014/03/25/lack-or-lash/>

SABG meetings

Report on the Autumn 2018 SABG meeting

Our last meeting was held on Sunday 7th October 2018 at our usual venue, the Badger Farm Community Centre near Winchester. Paul Cumbleton gave a talk on "Growing and propagating South African winter-growing bulbs". He wrote a summary of his findings, "Hardiness of South African Bulbs", which is included below in this Newsletter. A fuller report on the meeting will follow in the next Newsletter.

The next SABG meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Sunday 7th April 2019** 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 speaker for the morning session is Kit Strange from RBG Kew, who will give a demonstration of how bulbs are grown at Kew.

If you have any plants in flower, please consider bringing them for the display table. We won't have the benefit of Bill bringing lots of his plants at this meeting, so what better way to salute him than to bring some of your own!

New timetable

For this meeting, as an experiment, we plan to change the timetable to shorten the lunch break and move the Committee meeting to follow after the end of the main meeting. This will mean that Committee members can join in with informal chat and discussions at lunch-time, and those who are not members of the Committee will be able to get away a little earlier, which may help those with long journeys.

There will be no change to the starting time, which is 10:00. If you are bringing any plants for the display table, or plants or other items for sale, you are welcome to arrive a few minutes earlier to bring them into the hall.

We propose to bring the finishing time forward to 14:30, to allow the Committee to meet then, rather than during the lunch break. This will allow us to shorten the previously rather long break to one hour, or perhaps a bit less, and Committee members will be available to talk to other members and visitors during the lunch break.

What we plan is as follows:

10:00: Meeting hall open to members
 10:00 – 11:00: Plant sales, etc.
 11:00 – 12:00: Main speaker's talk
 12:00 – 13:00: Lunch break
 13:00 – 14:00: Afternoon talks and discussion
 14:00 – 14:30: Clearing up
 14:30: Meeting hall closed

This timetable is not "cast in stone". It will allow for the main speaker's talk to be a bit longer than one hour if required, while trying to keep to a prompt 13:00 start for the afternoon session. Similarly, the closing time may be a little later if the afternoon talks and discussion take more than an hour.

We still have two to two and a half hours for talking to other members, viewing the display and plant sales, so we hope you will not find the meeting to be unnecessarily curtailed. If you have any comments before, during or after the meeting, please let a Committee member know (names and contact details at the end of this Newsletter, as usual).

Meeting activities

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. As well as plants, 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 12.00 until 13.00. 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 2019 meeting

The Autumn meeting will be on **Sunday 6th October 2019**, also at the Badger Farm Community Centre.

Christine Skelmersdale is scheduled to give us a talk in the morning. More details will follow in due course.

Hardiness of South African Bulbs

“Can I grow it without heat?” – is a question I frequently get asked when giving talks about bulbs from South Africa. It is clear that many people are put off from growing these plants because of the perceived requirement of providing frost-free conditions. There is no doubt that providing a frost-free environment is the *safest* approach, but for many people this is impractical, or they feel unable to justify the expense. But in reality, very little is known about the hardiness under U.K. conditions of most species of South African bulbs, with the exception of some summer-growers that are familiar garden plants. Knowing that several SABG members grew their collections in unheated glasshouses and that some have also tried a few plants outdoors in the garden, it seemed to me to be a good idea to pool our experiences.

One survey later and I was most surprised at the collected data – the 15 respondents had between them tried around 230 species without using heat, far more than I had imagined. About 180 of these proved hardy *to some degree* either under unheated glass or in the open garden. This is almost 80% of the species tried.

Hardiness is a fickle thing, affected by a very large number of variables – the provenance of the plants, genetic variation, length of exposure to difficult conditions, moisture levels and a great many more factors will affect whether a plant proves hardy under any particular set of conditions. It is almost impossible to say whether a particular plant will prove hardy *for you*, even if others find it so. As with so many other aspects of gardening, much depends on your own local microclimate. But I still believe that sharing our own experience can be valuable in giving at least a guide. For example, if lots of people from many different localities in the UK report success without heat for a particular species, then it may be that this species would be worth trying more than another for which many people report failure. But you won't know for sure if it will survive for you under your conditions until you try it yourself.

There is simply too much data to fit all of it into this newsletter, so I will report here a few examples of the

results from the survey. The full data is available on the SABG web site⁴, or if that is not convenient, please email me (address at the end of the Newsletter) and I can send you it as an Excel spreadsheet.

Examples of Summer-Growing Plants Grown under unheated Glass

The minimum temperature that anyone recorded them surviving:

- *Androcymbium striatum* (-6C)
- *Eucomis schiffii* (-6C)
- *Gladiolus ecklonii, ferruginea, flanaganii* (-6C)
- *Massonia wittebergensis* (-6)
- *Nerine kreigii, masoniorum, undulata* (-6C)
- *Tulbaghia natalensis* (-6C)

Examples of Winter-Growing Plants Grown under unheated Glass

The minimum temperature that anyone recorded them surviving:

- *Babiana sambucina* (-5C)
- *Daubinya zeyheri* (-5C)
- *Eucomis regia* (-6C)
- *Freesia andersoniae* (-5)
- *Geissorhiza corrugata, splendissima* (-6C)
- *Hesperantha hantamensis* (-7C)
- *Lachenalia congesta* (-10C)
- *Massonia jasminiflora, longipes, roggeveldensis* (-10C)
- *Moraea ciliata, elegans, fugacissima, gigandra* (-5C)
- *Romulea hallii, hantamensis, komsbergensis, obscura, syringodeoflora* (-10C)
- *Tritonia florentiae* (-6C)

Examples of Summer-Growing Plants Grown Outside in the Garden

The minimum temperature that anyone recorded them surviving:

- *Eucomis bicolor, comosa, montana, pole-evansii, vandermerwei* (-7C)
- *Albuca nelsonii* (-7C)
- *Gladiolus dalenii* (-6)
- *Gladiolus nanus* types (-7C)
- *Massonia saniensis* (-6C)

4 <https://sabg.tk/topics/hardy:start>

Examples of Winter-Growing Plants Grown Outside in the Garden

The minimum temperature that anyone recorded them surviving:

- *Babiana* ‘Kew Hybrids’ (-7C)
- *Daubenyia aurea, marginata* (-8C)
- *Freesia leichtlinii* (-7)
- *Hesperantha cucullata, vaginata* (-8C)
- *Ixia dubia, flexuosa, maculata, monadelpha, paniculata, viridiflora* (-7C)
- *Moraea collina, flaccida, marlothii, ochroleuca, pendula, polystacha* (-8C)
- *Nerine humilis* (-8C)
- *Oxalis hirta, pocockiae* (-7C)

Now here are some examples of records of plants dying.

Winter-Growing Plants that died at -5 centigrade under Unheated Glass

- *Babiana blanda, nana*
- *Cyanella orchidiformis*
- *Gladiolus stenosophon, watermeyerii*
- *Lachenalia bulbifera, liliflora, orchioides, pusilla, pygmaea, trichophylla*
- *Moraea aristata*
- *Romulea schlechteri*
- *Sparaxis elegans*
- *Veltheimia capensis*

Winter-Growing Plants that died at -5 centigrade Outdoors

- *Chasmanthe floribunda*
- *Empodium flexile*
- *Ferraria crispa, divaricata* (OK to -3C)
- *Veltheimia bracteata*

All this data needs interpretation – for example how long they were exposed to the temperature quoted, as well as other factors, will affect these results. Some of this information is included in the full dataset.

When I gave my talk to the Group about all this, I also mentioned work done by James Hitchmough (Sheffield University, reported in *The Plantsman*, Volume 10 part 2, June 2011). Of plants he used in his experiments, he suggested the following had the most cold-hardy potential:

- *Romulea komsbergensis*
- *Ixia curvata*
- *Ixia thomasiae*
- *Moraea macronyx*
- *Moraea pritzeliana*
- *Ixia rapunculoides*
- *Bulbinella nutans* var. *nutans*

Conclusions

It seems to me from these results that a great many South African Bulbs will tolerate at least some frost, more so than one might imagine. It certainly spurs me to encourage people to try growing South African bulbs under glass even if they cannot provide winter heating and to expect a good number of successes under typical winter conditions. More extreme cold, especially if protracted, may be another story but even here the addition of some protection such as fleece may make a substantial difference to the outcome.

Outside in the garden we know rather less about. Far fewer species have been tried outdoors, and summer moisture may be a more important factor than winter cold for many species that are used to a warm, dry summer. But there are certainly a few species which seem to work well outdoors, and the more we try, the more we may discover. Ever keen to experiment I have, since giving the talk, planted a selection of species outdoors, unprotected, in a raised bed. So far they have all shrugged off a brief period at -3 centigrade without any problems. I will report more detail about this experiment once it has been running for a while – in a few years’ time!

Paul Cumbleton, November 2018

Bulbils

Rod & Rachel Saunders

In the October 2018 Silverhill Seeds newsletter⁵, Ondine Schrick (who had worked for Rod and Rachel Saunders for over twenty years and is now the owner of the business) writes “We hope Rod and Rachel are in a gentler place now – perhaps at the top of a mountain gazing down over unfolding hills and valleys, tranquil. Work done, dreams and adventures fulfilled. The world a richer place for their time spent here.” There are many other tributes in the Scottish Rock Garden Club forum⁶.

5 <http://www.silverhillseeds.co.za/newsletter.asp>

6 <http://www.srgc.net/forum/index.php?topic=16118.15>

Cameron McMaster

Last year was not kind to the brightest stars in the SA bulbs universe. Caroline Stone of the NAAS informed me at the end of November that “it is with great sadness that we have received news of the death of Cameron McMaster, a NAAS member and leading expert on South African bulbs. Many of you will have had the pleasure of going on a tour organised by him, attended a talk by him or bought bulbs from him. He was our guide for the NAAS expedition in 2015 and following that trip a nerine species he showed us that had been incorrectly identified was renamed *Nerine macmasteri* after him in recognition of his many years of work in monitoring the site. He was passionate about the conservation of South African flora and fauna and a man of great character. He died on November 24th having battled cancer for some years.”

Cameron gave a talk to the SABG at Exbury Gardens on 20 June 2010, briefly reported in Newsletter 16⁷. Jon Evans said that “there was a lovely tribute to Cameron in the latest PBS newsletter by Mary Sue Ittner” and pointed me to a note on the SRGC website with photos by Bert Zaalberg⁸.

2018 SABG Bulb & Seed Exchange

Jon Evans has reported some corrections to the identifications of the plant material distributed in the 2018 SABG Bulb & Seed Exchange, as follows:

“As always, some of the items distributed by the exchange turn out to be misidentified. Often this is because they are seedlings grown from seed from the exchange, and the donor has never seen them flower. Sometimes it is because things have seeded around in the greenhouse. So all I can do is distribute information about the mistakes as I am told about them. This year, the following items have been reported back to me:

- item #33 (“*Drimia nana*”) in this year’s exchange. Grown by Bill Squire from exchange seed. I kept and grew a few of these bulbs and I am sorry to say that a few of them produced flowers and are clearly a *Polyxena (Lachenalia)*, possibly *P. paucifolia* or *P. corymbosa*, not a *Drimia* at all. It is hard to be sure of the species from this initial sparse flowering of seedlings.
- A bulb labelled as “*Daubenya* sp. (Port Nolloth)” (item #30) produced a few flowers which proved to be another *Polyxena*.

- Seed # 501 (“*Pelargonium appendiculatum*”) from Ralph Martin sent as the Ralf Hilmann collection RH3404a turns out to be *P. alchemilloides*.”

Members may be interested in the complexities of the operation and the hard work put in by Jon Evans. He reported to the Committee that “the size of the [2018] operation increased significantly from 2017, possibly partly because of Bill’s ‘leaving present’. If this increase continues next year I may need to seek assistance for the packeting weekend.”

	2017	2018
Donors	23	25
Items donated	453	608
Requests	52	61
Packets distributed	1340	c. 1900
Expenses	£241.04 (£178.67 postage)	£257.59 (£192.01 postage)
Donations (cheques)	£163	£377.04 (£4.04 in stamps)
Donations (Paypal)	£217.49	£276.58
Donations (Total)	£394.49	£653.62
Surplus	£153.45	£396.03

The costs he reported included printing paper lists, cardboard boxes, manilla envelopes and glassine envelopes, and the amount attributed to “postage” included printing colour labels and car parking (presumably for carrying armfuls of parcels to the post office!)

He also reported that a few issues arose, including “some errors in the list because I was very short of time when I sent it out and didn’t proof-read it” and “a few ‘picking’ errors (4 known), despite checking”. I trust that everyone who participated understood how much effort he had put in.

Jon recommended to the Committee that in future the suggested donations should be adjusted slightly to try to make members’ contributions a bit fairer, and ask overseas members to donate (via Paypal).

SABG Finances

Donations by the SABG

Members will be interested to know that the Group’s finances are healthy enough for us to make small donations to encourage selected activities to benefit the study and conservation of South African bulbs.

7 <https://sabg.tk/media/newsletter:sabgnews16.pdf>

8 <http://www.srgc.net/forum/index.php?topic=15942.msg398376#msg398376>

The Committee has authorised two donations recently, as follows:

- To Jonathan Hutchinson for participation in a field trip to Zimbabwe in January 2019 for research on *Scadoxus*.
- To the R. Saunders Trust for publication of the *Gladiolus* book the Saunders were working on, as mentioned in Newsletter 38.

We hope you will approve of this use of our resources, and you will be welcome to make suggestions for deserving causes to the Committee, bearing in mind that our funds are strictly limited and we must allow for expected and unexpected future costs.

Membership of the SABG

The SABG maintains a financial surplus from various sources such as meeting fees, donations in respect of the Bulb and Seed Exchange and commission from plant sales, despite having no annual membership fee. The latter means that there is no membership renewal process: once you have joined as a member, you will remain a member on our lists unless and until you let us know that you wish to leave. Having said that, individual members cost the SABG nothing, unless you receive newsletters by post, so we encourage you to remain and not leave!

If you do receive newsletters by post, please consider whether you would now be able to receive them by email or read them on the web, or if this is not possible, an occasional donation to cover the cost of postage, or

supplies of stamped addressed envelopes, would be most welcome.

In the next Newsletter

I plan to produce the next Newsletter (no. 40) for distribution in early summer 2019. Do let me know of anything you would like to be included.

SABG Committee

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By the way, if you want to get in touch with a Committee member and don't have the use of email, you are welcome to ring or text me or leave a message on 07751 937060 or 01425 653840 or write to Richard White, 1 Cottage Mews, Fordingbridge SP6 1RJ

