

# The story of the origins of the Aloe Cactus & Succulent Society of Zimbabwe

Hans Wolbert

Greetings gardeners and fellow succulent enthusiasts I am going to try and give a piece of the history of our club. I have gathered information from as many historical papers that I could find and of course there are gaps which I will not try to fill with guess work.

It all started with a handful of people of different background, knowledge and skills, but, with the shared interest in the hypnotising beauty and diversity of our country's succulent species.

One can imagine these people at one stage or the other walking around the mountains and bushveld of our beloved country under the magic of sub-tropical Africa, with the sun on their backs and open bushland in front of them. One can also imagine that in a quiet moment their attention focusses on the beauty of an aloe or succulents in their natural habitat, and that interest they take home with them.

In the late 1940s a national Cactus and Succulent Society did exist although there is very little information from that. The members of that society joining a Botanical society in the area which flourished for a few years and then faded away.

Then there was Emden (Dan) Pienaar with his wife Shirley who was interested in succulents who put an advertisement in the Herald on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1969 inviting other interested people to form an Aloe and Succulent Society to contact him. A meeting was arranged at the house of Mike Kimberley at 15 Cheshire Road Avondale. Members present at that meeting were:

**Dan Pienaar; Derek Bain; Nick Bey; Mike Kimberley; Derek Lawson; Charles Pert; Marshall Richardson; Brian Terry; Tony Weeks; Vic Whitehouse; Rosemary Kimberley, and Doreen Burman**

There was much debate as to what name to give to the new Society. Those interested in Aloes wanted it to be called Aloe Society whilst others wanted a more Succulent name and those Cactus lovers wanted Cactii to be mentioned. A compromise was reached and the Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society was named. The first interim committee was formed with Dan Pienaar; Mike Kimberley; Derek Lawson; Charles Pert and Brian Terry. They had the job of creating our Constitution. With Mike Kimberley handling the legal drafting the Constitution was unanimously adopted and office bearers selected at a meeting held at the house of Tony Weeks at 20 Rockwood Road Hatfield on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1969.

The bearers of office were :-

Chairman:	Dan Pienaar
Deputy Chairman:	Brian Terry
Honorary Secretary:	Mike Kimberley
Honorary Treasurer:	Derek Bain

Additional Members: Derek Lawson; Charles Pert; Tony Weeks; Mrs W. Murray Scott; Mrs B Terry; Mr RWA Turner and Mrs M Weeks.

Also present at the meeting were the following

G H Brewer; Mrs. D. Burman, Mrs P D Clarke, Miss G. E. Clarkson, CE Eggleston, A Ellert, Mr & Mrs R Fitt, Mrs M Hicks, C E Le Resche, K Milbourne Wright, D Molyneux, W Murray Scott

Objectives of the constitution was:-

- a. To unite all who wish to foster a wider appreciation and knowledge of aloes, cacti and succulents

- b. To promote the extension of members' collection of aloes, cacti and succulents on a discipline basis and to serve their interest in this connection
- c. To work for the preservation and conservation of the indigenous flora of this country particularly aloes and succulents in their natural habitat and to collaborate with the appropriate authorities to this regard.
- d. To strive for the reestablishment in botanical gardens, parks or other areas of species of aloes and succulents threatened by extinction
- e. To carry out and encourage research work on aloes, cacti and succulent and thereby expand knowledge in the field
- f. To cooperate and liaise with appropriate government department and bodies to further the aims of the society.
- g. To affiliate to any society having similar interests.
- h. To

The task of editing quarterly Newsletters was given to Mike Kimberley. The first Newsletter was published in June 1969. By the next AGM there were 100 members. The first Seedbank was managed in 1969 by Mrs Mienkie Weeks. The Society's Crest was designed by Mrs Weeks which involves an Aloe, a Cactus and a separate Succulent. The plants designed are *Aloe ortholopha*, *Astrophytum asterias* and *Lithops volkii*.

In August 1969 the Society affiliated themselves to the South African Aloe and Succulent Society.

**On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1970** the first branch of the Society was established in Matabeleland. Mr. Ted Bullock became the Branch Chairman, Peggy Morris the Secretary and two Committee Members: John Coulson and Bill Wilson.

**In 1971** the first Excelsa Journal was adopted by the Committee with Mike Kimberley as Editor and Robert Turner Assisting. The name of the journal 'Excelsa' was suggested by Mr. Turner. The first 2 editions were sponsored by five private companies and Excelsa 3 was funded entirely by the Society.

1971 saw Brian Terry as Chairman; Mike Kimberley as Deputy Chairman; Derek Bain as Secretary and Dan Pienaar as the Treasurer. Additional Committee Members were: Tony Weeks, Eric Eggleston and Mienkie Weeks.

As early as 1971 there were serious concerns over the destruction of *Aloe ortholopha*, *Euphorbia wildii* and *Euphorbia schinzii* by mining operations on the Dyke and a number of rescue operations were carried out with many of the plants going to Botanic Gardens in the Country.

**In 1972** the national committee was getting overburdened and it was agreed that an additional Mashonaland Branch committee be set up to organise social functions including garden visits, field trips, slide shows, lectures, plant sales, rescue operations etc.

Memberships at that time (1972) were in the region of 475 the first Mashonaland Branch Committee consisted of: Chairman:-Tony Weeks; Mienkie Weeks; Maureen Fitt; Brian Atkins; John Heyneke; George Pope and Basil Twyman. They had their first Committee meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1972.

The Constitution was amended to accommodate new branches at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting of members in March 1972. The structure of the National Council consisting of a National Chairman, National Deputy Chairman, National Honorary Secretary, National Honorary Treasurer and six additional members of which each branch had the right to appoint two representatives. Branch Committees were given the power to raise and disburse funds without reference to the National Council.

The new constitution also provided the election of an Honorary President and an unlimited number of Honorary Vice Presidents. However, the Honorary President and Vice Presidents term was not continuous but lasted for a few years after which another President and Vice Presidents would be elected. The first Honorary President was Miss Gladys Clarkson a position she held until her death in 1975. She was then succeeded by Mrs Kathleen Reynolds widow of the late Dr Gilbert Reynolds and she lived in Swaziland.

The Honorary Vice Presidents were:- Mr. Ted Bullock; Professor Desmond Cole (RSA); Mr Larry Leach (Zim); Mr John Lavranos (RSA); Mr Raymond Munch (Zim); Mr Darrel Plowes (Zim) and Professor Hiram Wild (Zim)

In 1972 after the amendment to the Constitution the National Chairman was Brian Terry, National Deputy Chairman- Mike Kimberley, National Secretary – Derek Bain, National Treasurer – Ben Pienaar, Council Members: Roger Sandall and Robert Turner.

Membership was 530

In **1973** National Chairman – Mike Kimberley; National Deputy Chairman- Tony Weeks; National Honorary Secretary – Roger Sandall, Treasurer E A Pienaar

Amendments to the Constitution regarding the notice period for AGM and general meetings were made, and the changes as follows:

- i. In Clause 7(5) by the deletion of “14 days and the substitution of 21 days”
- ii. In clause 9 (3) by the deletion of “Sent to all members at least 14 days before such meeting” consisted of informing members of meetings.
- iii. Substitution of “Published for the information of all members in the quarterly newsletter or otherwise circulated to all members”.

Membership was at 760 in that year.

The first Annual Aloe Show was held from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1973 in the Garden Club Hall at the Show Grounds. This was opened by the then President of the Country’s wife Mrs. Armenell Dupont and she presented the floating Trophies. The show was attendant by 3000 people resulting in superb financial gains for the Society. There were 180 entries in the show.

A Show Committee was set up consisting of Show Chairman – Vernon Barnes Pope. Committee members were: Roger Sandall; Will Brand; Derek Lawson; Dan Pienaar; Majorie Russel; Tony Weeks; Mienkie Weeks and Lisel Gilges.

The Mashonaland Branch Committee consisted of Mr. T Weeks; Mrs. M. Weeks; Mr. G Pope; Mrs M. Fitt; Mr. J Heyneke; Mr. B Twyman and Mr. B. Atkins.

Later that year (1973) Mrs. Court would replace Mr. J Heyneke after his passing. It was agreed by the committee that they would meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 5:15p.m. These committee meetings were held at the Government Veterinary Offices. The Society was to open a CABS account with the signatories being Mr. B. Atkins; Mr. B. Twyman with Mrs. M. Fitt as an alternate. It was agreed that members should wear name badges during Society functions and 30% of the profits made by sellers on the plant sale was claimed by the Society. The sellers handling their own money under trust of the Society.

Succulents & Aloes that were at risk of destruction due to human development were arranged to be taken to safety in other places and rescues were at times arranged for various projects.

Rescued plants from the Nyarira Dam Development Project in Chivhu, *A. acculeata* and *A. chabaudii* were rescued and delivered to Ministry of Agriculture. Some were taken for the Aloe Garden at the National Archives. Those which were not utilised by the Ministry were allowed to be taken by the Society Members. Various rescues were being organised and members were charged \$0.50c for the car at the site and the car could be filled with rescued plants. In most cases rescues occurred where dam projects were underway, where such areas would be submerged by water. However, in a few cases it was starting to look like raiding of a habitat and concerns were raised by some members of the committee.

In April 1973 Tony Weeks became National Vice Chairman.

Advertising of the plant sale went through some popular shops like Barbours and also announced on Radio. The sale was held in conjunction with the Aloe Show which was organised by the Show Committee and all plants had to be brought in half an hour before the show started.

It was earlier around this time that the Society had received a copy of the proposed legislation for the protection of the flora and fauna of the country from the Secretary of Lands with the request for the Society’s comments. Unfortunately this letter was not responded to on time which made the Society unpopular with the Lands Department. Mr. Kimberley and Mr Sandall had to draw-up a reply giving the Society’s approval and support of the

document given by the Lands Department. It was here that Mr. Kimberley became involved with setting the legalisation for the protection of the plants of this country.

It was stressed during this time that articles from the members were crucial for the success of the Excelsa Magazines.

There were funny things like the finding of the dividing line of the branches in the country and it was decided from Gokwe, Masvingo to Beitbridge (basically from Bumi Hills on Lake Kariba to Malvernia on the South East Border). South would be Matebeleland and northwards would be Mashonaland Branch. Kwekwe was to fall under the latter.

**1974** National Chairman was Mike Kimberley; National Deputy Chairman- Robert Turner; National Secretary – Rosemary Beck; National treasurer – John Parsons; Council Members – Peter Beck and Henry Cowan. Mashonaland representatives- Tony Weeks; Basil Twyman; Mienkie Weeks and George Pope. Matebeleland Representatives – Ted Bullock; Eric Walker; John Coulson.

1974 Mashonaland branch office bearers were:-

Mr Twyman – Chairman; Mr G Pope – Vice Chairman; Mr Atkins – Treasurer; Mr Weeks and Mrs Fitt- Joint secretaries; Mr TBC Harding, Mr. D Richards and Mr. D Trickett as additional members.

There was effort by the Society to create an Aloe garden at the Harare Botanical Gardens, but progress was slow with the Curator Mr. Muller.

Plant sellers now gave 25% of their sales to the Society and that time the sale was a 3-day affair. Friday 0900hrs to 2100hrs; Saturday 0900hrs to 1500hrs and Sunday 0900hrs to midday. The sale was held at the Show ground in the Garden Hall.

In 1974 the country experienced fuel shortages which resulted in fuel rationing, and coupons were issued according to one's needs. The government fuel controller was approached to organise extra fuel coupons to enable rescue operations to be undertaken.

There was another big rescue operation at the Msengezi Dam Project where a number of *A. excelsa* (pink; red; yellow variations); *A. chabaudii*, *A. cameronii*, *Euphorbia* spp, Palms, Stapeliads and orchids were moved. Another rescue was organised at the Great Dyke. Seed collection outings were also set up to encourage private cultivation.

Membership: - in December 1974 saw membership pass the 850 mark.

Membership subscriptions were as follows:

- Members who paid \$100.00 became life members
- Normal membership subscription was \$4.00 and for couples \$5.00. Junior membership was \$2.00

Payment of Honoraria was introduced and agreed on as follows:

- Honorary Editor received \$100.00 per annum
- Honorary Secretary received \$25.00 per month
- Honorary Treasurer received \$20.00 per month
- Auditor received \$20.00 per annum.

In November the committee approved the idea of an Aloe Rally organised by Mr Boots Harding with the starting venue at the National Archives..... the Rally was a pre-planned route with about 64 en route questions and about 36 plant identification questions in 6 different gardens with bonus points, penalty points and handicaps for experts incorporated into the scoring system

Mr. Dan Pienaar who was now living in South Africa was made an Honorary Member. The Flora and Fauna Act would go through Parliament the following year in April.

In July 1974 the Matebeleland branch had their first non-competitive Succulent Show which was a huge success.

**1975** – Honorary Officers Appointed:- PLM Beck; CG Jennings; MJ Kimberley, GAK Pope.

Osborne Dam Site was visited by Mike Kimberley, Chris Kimberley and Branch Committee member in Charge of Rescues Mr. George Pope, arranged by Manicaland Project Engineer for Water Development Mr. JC Johnson. Society members would later be invited to the site to rescue the plants.

By the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1975 there were 900 members. Mashonaland branch Committee in 1975 were:- Mr. Twyman – Chairman, Mr. G Pope – Vice Chairman, Mr. Hardy, Treasurer Mr. Atkins, Secretaries - Mrs Weeks & Mrs Fitt, Additional Members - Mr Peacocke, Mr. Leresche, Mrs Ludlam and Mrs Bloom.

Matebeleland Branch Committee:- Chairman- Mr J Coulson, Secretary – Mrs A Ewbank, Additional Members – Mr R Chapple, Mr HAC Gane, Mr P Nash

Plant sales continued at the Show Grounds.

## **ALOE CONGRESS 75**

It was Robert Turner who on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 1973 convinced the National Council to Support his proposal to have an International Succulent Plant Congress. A Sub Committee was made up of the following:-

**Convener – Mr. RWS Turner, Deputy Convener – Mr MJ Kimberley, Secretary – Mrs M Fitt, Treasurer - J S Parsons, School Art – Mrs GD Court, Transport & Accommodation – Mrs P Menage, Matebeleland Member – Mrs P Nash, Plant Sales & Chief Courier – Mr G Pope, Show Chairman - Mr P Beck, Additional Members –Mrs RMT Barker, Mrs S Hunt, Mrs M Russell, Mr A Schull, Mr B Twyman**

The sub-committee then broke down the various committees for specialised tasks i.e. Transport; Catering; Souvenirs; Publicity and Public Relations; Lectures and Slide Shows, Liaison; Registration and Information & Enrolment

The first day covers of postage stamps depicting the country's Aloes were made. There was a National School Succulent Plant Art Competition and a Philatelic Exhibition that had been added to the programme

A pre-congress week in the Eastern Highlands organised by Mr. Darrel Plowes from Monday 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> July. Honorary Vice President Mr. R C Munch allowed delegates to visit his garden in Rusape. His garden was normally closed to the public apparently one of the greatest aloe gardens in the world at the time. The other places visited was Hotsprings, La Rochelle, the botanical treasure house at the time, Cashel & Melsetter. Aloes and Stapeliads were observed in habitat in the area. The Mutare aloe garden was visited as well as trips to Nyanyadzi, Birchenough Bridge where many succulents were observed in habitat. Vumba National Park was also visited. Darrel Plowes' collection of stapeliads, lithops and aloes was not left out.

On their way back to Harare delegates had afternoon tea organised by the Society's Marondera group at the garden of Mrs AA Van Tonder.

The opening of the formal congress on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July was done by the Mayor of the City Mr Tony Tanser. The opening to the public of the Society's Annual Show on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July also combined with the Congress and a set of 6 postage stamps were issued that day by the Postmaster General to commemorate Aloe 75. Delegates were invited by Mr. & Mrs DuPont the President of the Country that time for cocktails at the government house.

Speakers at the congress were:-

1. Prof. H Wild on Serpentine Soils on the Great Dyke
2. Prof. Desmond Cole on Lithops
3. Mr. John Lavranos on Succulent Plants
4. Prof. G Bond
5. Mr. MB Bayer on Haworthias
6. Mr Larry C Leach on Euphorbiaceae
7. Mr Darrel C H Plowes on Stapeliads of the Southern Cape
8. Mr S W (Pip) Nelson on Aloe Breeding
9. Mr A Koeleman on Aloe Cultivars
10. Mr Michael Gelfand on Medicinal Uses of Succulents
11. Mr M J Kimberley National Plant Protection
12. Mr Rolf Rauwe on Mesembryanthemaceae

13. Mr RWS Turner Aloes in Literature
14. Prof. N F Laubscher on Leptoaloe
15. Mr M Kamstra on the Evolution of Aloes
16. Mr Oliver West on Rhodesian Aloes
17. Mr E J Bullocks on Rhodesian Aloes
18. Mr C A Van Ee on Aloes and Succulents of the Orange Free State
19. Mr J S Whellan on Malawian Aloes

On Thursday evening delegates were invited by the Mayor of the city for a Sundowner Party and on Friday evening the 18<sup>th</sup> of July the official Congress Banquet was held.

The congress ended on Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> of July with a braai organised by the Mashonaland committee at Ewanrigg. A whole ox was donated and cooked on a spit and braai packs were purchased to serve at least 400 people fires for the braai packs were lit at 3:00p.m. Sadza and gravy was organised by Mr. Atkins and Mrs. Fitt. The meat was organised by the catering committee consisting of Mr. Harding, Mr Peacocke and Mrs Bloem. From here annual braais were held at Ewanrigg and coupons were sold for meat and drinks.

Visits were organised to the gardens of Mr and Mrs Weeks, Mr & Mrs Terry, Mr & Mrs Kimberley and the farm of Mr. Dougal G Black. A visit to the National Museum to look at a botanical stamp exhibition organised by the Mashonaland Philatelic Society. They went to the National Archives to look at botanical paintings books and prints as well as their Aloe Gardens, Ewanrigg, Botanical Gardens and the Great Dyke

The Post Congress Tour at the end of the formal week was organised by the Matebeleland Branch of the Society from Monday 21<sup>st</sup> to Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July. Starting from the Great Zimbabwe and Lake Kyle where huge numbers of Aloes and Euphorbias were observed in habitat. Lunch at the Matopos on Wednesday. A healthy colony of *A. globuligemma* was visited at a place called South Nata, culminating in a visit to the Victoria Falls.

Mike Kimberley was elected Vice President of the African Succulent Plant Society of Great Britain after the Congress for his attributes being editor of Excelsa and his dissemination of the knowledge regarding Africa's succulent flora.

The Aloe Succulent Society of South Africa supported Aloe 75 and when they had their Succulenta 78 our Society supported them. The Society sent Mr. D H Plowes as a speaker on Stapeliads, Taxonomy, Mr. L Leach speaking on the Species Stapelieae and four delegates; Mr. JS Parsons; Mr. MJ Kimberley; Mr. RWS Turner and Mrs M Russell all together 30 local members represented the country.

There was a rescue organised at the Dyke and a proposal was made to National Parks and Wild Life to set up a small area as a national park to protect endangered plant species at the Dyke. Permission was obtained from the Ministry of Roads so that some of the rescued Aloes would be planted on the road side at Mutorashanga. The plants had to be planted 50m from the centre of the road by law. A small protected area was set up in Darwendale Northside Area to accommodate 50% of the plants taken on rescues. The area consisted of 8 acres. Soil tests were made if *A. ortholopha* could grow there. It was found that calcium and magnesium had to be added to the soil for these plants to continue growing. Mr. Buckland of Ewanrigg carried out the feeding trials for the Darwendale *A. ortholophas*.

A joint AGM of the Mashonaland and the Matebeleland branches was arranged to improve relations and friendship between the two committees and all members. Mashonaland branch offered 25% of the next Dyke rescue to go to the Matebeleland branch

The Marondera Botanic Society joined the Aloe Cactus & Succulent Society.

### **1976 National Council**

Chairman – RWS Turner

Deputy Chairman – Mr PAG Weeks

Honorary Secretary – Mrs V Parsons

Honorary Treasurer – Mr JS Parsons

Additional members :- Major P. Beck; Mrs M Russel, Mr. B Twyman

Honorary Editor – Mr. MJ Kimberley

Matabeleland Reps – Mr J Caulson; Mrs A Ewbank

Mashonaland Reps – Mrs M Weeks; Mr TBC Harding

**Matabeleland Branch Committee:-**

Chairman – Mr. J Coulson

Honorary Secretary – Mrs A Ewbank

Additional members – Mrs T Burger, Mr R Chapple, Mr R Cooper, Mr J Gane, Mr P Nash

**Mashonaland Committee:-**

Chairman - Mrs M Weeks

Vice Chairman – Mr GAK Pope

Honorary Secretary – Miss E Bloem

Honorary Treasurer – Mrs D Ludlam

Additional Members – Mr TBC Harding, Mr C Le Resche, <R B Peacock, Mr A Schuil

1976 Honorary Officers

Honorary President                 Mrs K Reynolds (Swaziland)

Honorary Vice President         Mr EJ Bullock    Bulawayo)  
  Prof. DT Cole    (Johannesburg)  
  Mr J Lavranos   (Johannesburg)  
  Mr LC Leach     Harare  
  Mr RC Munch    Rusape  
  Mr DCH Plowes Mutare  
  Prof. H Wild     Harare

An award scheme conceived by Mr Dave Richards and submitted to the Mashonaland branch was approved by the National Council. The award system was designed to encourage members to propagate, study and cultivate Zimbabwean Aloes without hybridizations in order to ensure the survival of local Species. The scheme was also designed to increase the knowledge in the care and upkeep of local aloes and to encourage the experimentation in growing out of habitat aloes like *A. ortholopha* and *A. christianii*. Gardens would be visited by judges who would look at the number of species of local aloes condition and quality. No regard was put towards the garden landscaping only towards the types and condition of the aloes. At the end a member was given a certificate. Copper class A or B, Silver and Gold. Lapel badges were made for those members holding the relevant certificates.

Matabeleland branch held a Cactus Show.

Regarding the Dyke rescues there were concerns between miners and non-members that appeared in a Herald Newspaper Article in November over the extensive aloe rescues occurring on the Dyke. It was the view by the miners that aloes that were in no way going to be affected by their mining were removed from the place of habitat therefore denying other people enjoying their beauty. They were also stating that the plants taken would probably not survive outside the serpentine soil of the Dyke. This issue attracted the attention of the Chamber of Mines. Fortunately, permission from the Managing Director of Anglo-America for the rescue of the plants from the Caesar Mine area had been given prior to collections.

**In 1977** amendments to the constitution were passed on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March concerning membership fee update and voting procedures involving votes via proxy. Excels 6 pg 118 -121

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1977 Mashonaland Branch organised a "Plant Out" session at the Balancing Rocks in Epworth where members were planting indigenous aloes in the area. The project was a joint venture between the National Trust of Rhodesia and the Aloe Cactus and Succulent Society. The mandate was arranged for one year. The Mountain Club happened to be visiting the site on that same day and it was from here that the Mountain Club and this Society became allies.

Mr. Peacocke suggested to have a separate Cactus and Succulent show because these were in flower at a different time as the main show in July.

Sadly, Mr G. Pope passed away in 1977. Mrs. Ludlam took over the post of treasurer left by Mr. Pope. Without Mr Pope the Darwendale protection site fizzled out.

**In 1979** Mike Kimberley was made Chairman of the Mukuvisi Woodlands Association, he played a pivotal role in registering the Mukuvisi Woodlands Association as a company ensuring the protection and development of the area for conservation. Four committees were formed to plan the development of the area.

There were other constitution amendments made in 1979 mainly consisting of name changing in line with the political environment as well as other changes involving Honorary President and Vice Presidents. A sub-committee to deal with the selecting of Honorary President and Vice Presidents and Honorary Members consisting of Mr. Kimberley; Mr. Harding and Mr. Leresche was set up.

The same year the Mashonaland branch was doing work at the Balancing Rocks through Mr Harding and Mr Peacock. The Matebeleland Branch were undertaking extensive work at Mabukuweni.

**In 1980** there were more amendments to the constitution were made mainly changing of the old name of the country to the new one (Rhodesia to Zimbabwe)

Membership was recorded at 528 as at August 1980

**1981** there was a slight amendment to the constitution regards to families i.e. Husband and wife including children. There were 498 members in 1981.

An Easter convention was held in 1981 with lectures given on succulents and natural history in the aim of attracting other members of the History Society. About 10 lectures were given with additional functions and visits including Ewanrigg Botanical Gardens. Mr. D Richards was the Show Chairman

The transport of delegates from the Matebeleland branch to Harare to attend AGMs and other meetings was proving a little difficult

The National Council organised a one-week tour to Malawi to see places of interest and The National Council and Mashonaland Branch helped to sponsor Mr DCH Plowes on his North African Botanical Expedition.

**1982** an amendment to the constitution was made. Noting changes from 4 National Council Meetings to two council Meeting per year.

Matabeleland Branch had their first magazine issue "Gem" and a Branch Show organised by Messrs Whitman and Chapple was held.

Membership was 448.

Mr. Ted Bullock passed away that year.

**1983 Excelsa No. 11** was paid for by sponsorship from members. Future Excelsa were sponsored by corporate and members. Membership was 434 by June 1983.

A tour in Kenya was organised to look at succulents by Sybil Duncanson and Mrs Myall from the Matebeleland branch and 16 members participated while the Mashonaland branch through Mr. Harding; Mr. Weeks and Mr. Peacocke organised a tour of the Northern Cape, Namibia, the Western Province of South Africa and the Little Karroo with 21 participants.

**1984** membership was at 314 by August.

**1985** there were 235 members as at 30 March 1985. Dave and Doreen Richards played a large part in organising the shows in the 70s and 80s.

**1986** membership was at 204

**1988** saw the Aloe 88 conference taking place from Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> July. The conference consisted of a variety of local and foreign speakers who gave lectures on various subjects. Breakdown of the lectures are detailed in Excelsa No. 14.

The Matebeleland Branch organised all the accommodation and tours for this conference for the Southern region.

Tuesday 26 July they left the Falls and proceeded to Hwange where they looked at Euphorbia, Aloe and other Succulents in Habitat. Wednesday 27 July they went to the Lukosi Area to look at Aloe; Stapeliads; Euphorbia and Sanseveria; etc. Delegates who were participating in the Matabeleland tour, some flew and some went by coach.

The conference was held in Victoria Falls where the delegates flew in. They spent the first day of the conference (25 July) at the Falls.

The Mashonaland Branch arranged the Great Dyke visitation.

At the end of the year number 4 of the Taxonomic series of Excelsa was published and a thousand copies were made.

Membership was at 434 as at December

**1989**

Membership was at 358

**1990**

Amendment to the constitution was made to Clause 3 (4) This was to allow the National Council to set the subscriptions according to the financial climate. However, the members present at the AGM disagreed and it was resolved that the members shall decide on the subscription fees.

A cactus show was held through the Mashonaland Branch at the house of Mr. Ken Thornton from Friday 26<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October, but the attendance was disappointing.

Membership was 310

**1991**

Membership was at 306

On the 10 of February 1991 with 19 members present the Matebeleland Branch had a meeting where they unanimously resolved to disband the branch and donate the assets of the branch to another non Aloe society. They later formed a new Society which they named Mabukuwene Aloe Society

Mrs Doreen Richards was elected Fellow of the Club on 1991 around March. A fellow of the Society is a member or a non-member who has by some outstanding manner contributed to the advancement of knowledge of succulent plants or has contributed in some outstanding way towards the aims and objectives of the Society.

There was a farm garden rescue on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June and the 21<sup>st</sup> July at the Old farm of Edna and Dougall Black when the new owner wanted to bulldoze all the plants.

It was decided that the end of October/November for shows was not that good as well as the venue at the Mukuvisi Woodlands and that both should be changed. There was no Grand Show that year just a Miniature Succulent Garden Show and a car boot sale held at the Botanical Gardens on Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November from 0900hrs to 1800hrs. Mrs Joan Rutherford was the show Secretary. Parking for buyers was at the carpark with a guard organised for the safety of the cars.

## **1992**

A sunrise breakfast was organised and held at Ewanrigg on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March at 0800hrs.

The National Committee invited Mr. Schlachter to give a talk on the Care of Cycads to the Mashonaland Branch on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at their residence, Plot 23 Tynwald on a Saturday afternoon. It was at this meeting that the committee persuaded Mr Schlachter to join the Society and form an interest in Cycads and possibly Palms.

An Aloe Show was held from 17 – 19 July at the Mukuvisi Woodlands and was a huge success.

Aloe Rallies were still organised by Mr. Dave Jordan

August 22 the Cycad Branch was formed by Mr. Mike Kimberley and Mr. B Schlachter and was officiated in September of the same year.

The committee comprised of the following:-

Chairman	-	Mr. B Schlachter
Deputy Chairman	-	Mr. M Kimberley
Secretary and Treasurer-		Mrs M. Childes
Pollen & Seed Bank	-	Mr. B Schlachter
Registrar	-	Mr C. Chokwenda
Additional Members	-	Mr L Chisvo (Ewanrigg Curator) Mr M Harvey

On 6 November amendments to the constitution were made. These can be found in the Excelsa No. 13 page 144-146.

In the same year Oliver West's Aloes of Rhodesia was revised and prepared for Longmans Zimbabwe by Mr. MJ Kimberley for printing.

Membership was 326 paid up members

## **1993**

Amendments to the Constitution were made to clauses 10 & 11 for exemption from income tax and withholding tax. Membership was at 356 paid up members

25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> June The Aloe Show was held at the Mukuvisi Woodlands the committee was as follows:

The Show Committee comprised of the following:-

Chairman	-	Mr. D Richards
Secretary Show Committee	-	Mrs J Rutherford

Additional Members - Mr J Rimanek  
Mr C Wilkins  
Mr B Holdman  
Mr D. Jordan

On June 29<sup>th</sup> the Cycad branch organised a talk on Palm and Cycads with three experts from Australia this was held at the St George's College at the Beit Hall. The speakers were:

Dr. Ken Hill

Mr. Stan Walklay

Mr Peter Heilbloem

The Society was affiliated to the Zimbabwe Scientific Association who had lectures at the National Museum where our members could also attend.

An Aloe Rally incorporated a trip to the Kyle National Park for a weekend stay.

### **1994**

1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> July the Aloe Succulent Show was held at the Mukuvisi Woodlands which was also combined with a Craft Stall Fair organised by the Woodlands.

Another Aloe Rally had a route to La Rochelle near Penhalonga.

27<sup>th</sup> July A lecture was held at the Conqueanar on Samora Machel Avenue East in the evening. The Speaker was Susan Carter-Holmes who spoke on Succulents of Kenya.

Sadly Mrs. Joan Rutherford passed away in September of that year, followed by her husband Mr. Richard Rutherford in Early 1994 and Mrs Coco a loyal member also passed away in 1994.

23<sup>rd</sup> October at 1430hrs the Joan Rutherford Memorial Garden at Mukuvisi Woodlands was opened with a sundial erected in her memory. Members were asked to bring an indigenous plant, succulent or aloe

Membership was 356

### **1995**

The constitution was amended to include Palms, Cycads and other indigenous plants.

The Mashonaland and the Palm and Cycad Branches sometimes combined functions to make things more interesting and fun for all who attended.

The AGM was held at the Mbizi Game Park with Mervyn and Barbra Senior and an Aloe rally was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November involving gardens and sites around Zimbabwe

Membership was 388.

Mrs Rosemary Kimberley resigned as Honorary Secretary after 16 years at this post when she succeeded Mrs Viv Parsons in 1979. Mrs Sue Jordan was appointed Honorary Secretary. *Mr. Bob Holderman took over as Chairman from Mr Dave Jordan*

In 1995 Alan Percy Lancaster sadly passed away on 3 June in Pietersburg. He was a member for 25 years and an Honorary Vice President.

The Show at the Mukuvisi Woodlands at the Environment Centre was held but unfortunately there was a poor turnout compared to the previous year's one due to bad weather.

## 1996

An AGM for both branches the Mashonaland and Cycad & Palm Branch on 17 March at Bally Vaughn Game Park.

The Aloe Show was held from Friday 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

The Cycad branch designed a possession permit in respect of Zimbabwean Cycad Species and a Fridge for Cycad pollen was purchased and Ian Waters was in charge of the pollen bank

Chairman	-	Mr M Kimberley
Vic Chairman	-	Mr E Morris
Immediate Past Chairman	-	Mr B Schlachter
Secretary and Treasurer	-	Mrs M. Childes
Pollen & Seed Bank	-	Mr I Waters
Registrar	-	Mr C. Chokwenda
Additional Members	-	Mr L Chisvo (Ewanrigg Curator)
Additional Members	-	Mr M Harvey (in charge of Inventory of Cycads in Cultivation)
	-	Mrs P Maratos
		Mr B D Rivron

The Garden Expo '96 was held at the Harare Show Grounds from 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> October. This included a combined branch plant sale with Palms, Cycads and Aloes for sale. 10% of the sales was given back to the relevant branches. The Mashonaland Branch organised an Aloe Rally which was held at the Lake Muturukwi; Glenlivet; Masvingo area in November and 20 members participated.

## 1997

An AGM for the two branches was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February at the Botanical Gardens in the Education Centre.

On May 13<sup>th</sup> Mr. J Rimaneck went missing but was found dead near the Westgate Complex. Foul play was not suspected, it seemed he collapsed in the bush nearby whilst on a walk.

9<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> of June during the CITES Period the Aloe Show was held where succulents and cycads were on show and an 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> September another Garden Expo was held.

## 1998

The Palm and Cycad branch staged a sale of Cycad Seedlings at the home of Barrie and Bev Rivron on 26<sup>th</sup> April.

From 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June the Annual Show was held and was convened by Mr. Holdman and in September 25-27<sup>th</sup> September the Garden Expo was held.

The Mashonaland Branch Closed the Cabs Bank Account to reduce bank charges and Mrs V Siebert resigned from all Committees.

The Mashonaland Branch held a function with the Tree and Bonsai Societies.

## 1999

The latest Constitution was printed in the April Issue of Ingens

## 2000

The Palm and Cycad Branch organised a day meeting at Exotica Nursery which belonged Ms. Roslyn Houghton on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> of January. She gave a talk on landscaping with cycads after which the Cycad Branch held its Committee Meeting. Mashonaland Branch organised a tour of the Desert House at the National Botanical Gardens on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February.

A Succulent Expo 2000, Plant Show and Sale was held at the Botanical Gardens at the Desert House on June 23 – 24 from 0900hrs to 1700hrs and June the 25<sup>th</sup> from 0900hrs to 1200hrs.

The Palm and Cycad Branch Organised a visit to Ian Turner's World Renowned Cycad and Palm Garden at his farm off the Shamva Road. Together with the National Herbarium and Botanical Gardens, the Palm and Cycad Branch sponsored a Cycad and Palm Symposium and display on 30<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> of October. The times for the Symposium was from 0830hrs to 1600hrs. the Symposium took place at the Education Centre. Local Palm and Cycad Experts like Mr. B Schlachter, Mr. E Morris, Mr. I Turner, Mr. I Waters and Mr. M Kimberley gave talks. The Symposium was chaired by Mike Kimberley.

October 8, the Mashonaland and Palm & Cycad Branch organised a Plant Fair at the National Herbarium Administration Car Park. The Herbarium Gate was opened during this time to allow easy access of visitors

November 26<sup>th</sup> the two Branches organised a "Breakfast by the Boulders" in the garden of Tony and Mienkie Weeks. It was a Breakfast/Braai which started at 0830 after which Mr. Weeks gave a talk on Hybridising Aloes. This was followed by a clearance plant sale of his nursery before immigrating to South Africa. This year also saw the purchase our faithful Tea Urn from a neighbouring country and donated the Society by Mr. Parsons. So every time we take that cup of tea at our meetings we should remember Mr Parsons.

## **2001**

It was agreed that the Mashonaland branch and the National Committee would amalgamate. However, the Cycad Branch declined as they wanted to continue independently for another year.

Before the Millenium the Society carried out a lot of Farm Visits to Plant Habitat but as from 2000 onwards local garden visits became the norm. 25<sup>th</sup> November a Succulent Plant Symposium was held at National Botanical Gardens, with Mr. Kimberley being the convener, the speakers were:-

Darell Plowes  
Mike Kimberley  
Claude Leresche  
Brian Terry  
Ian Waters  
Weiner Fibeck

A Succulent Plant sale was held on 2 December at the Botanical Gardens near the Car park from 0930 to 1530 in the afternoon. Mr Harvey was the convener.

## **2002**

27 – 28 April a Palm Expo was held and Best Palm on show was won by Mrs. Liz Lapham and Mr B Schlachter was runner up. Certificates were given and Trophies were won. The Palm Expo was inspired by Mr Roeland Jooste.

The Palm & Cycad committee comprised of the following:-

Chairman	-	Mr. B Schlachter
Deputy Chairman	-	Mr. M Kimberley
Secretary and Treasurer-		Mrs M. Childes
Additional Members	-	Mr Liz Lapham
		Mrs. S Wrench
		Ms G. Maclaughlan
		Mr M Harvey
		Mr D Richards
		Mr M Gillespie

The National Committee, following the amalgamation of the Mashonaland branch closed the Beverley Account and transferred the funds to the main Society's account. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of May a breakfast was held at Ewanrigg, and the 21 – 23 June there was a Plant Show and Sale held at the Education Centre at Botanical Gardens

27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September the National Committee and Cycad Branch organised a visit to the Vumba.

### **2003**

The Constitution was amended allowing the committee to determine subscriptions to suite the economy.

In June a Plant Show and Sale was held simultaneously at the Botanical Gardens but there was a very poor turnout. This was the last show the Society would hold, leaving the trophies unwanted but a necessary burden in an old cardboard box taking up valuable cupboard space.

October saw the cancellation of a Palm Expo due to fuel shortages and November saw a symposium cancelled due to lack of speakers. It was harsh times for the club and the country.

2003 saw galloping inflation and fuel shortages which put extreme pressure on club functions. Mr D Richards and Mr. C Leresche were continuing to do work in the Desert House at the Botanical Gardens. Membership was at 224.

### **2004**

An AGM was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March at the Botanical Gardens and a Plant Sale was held in April. On 16 May a Symposium was organised by Mr. Kimberley and Mr. Saunders. Mr. Spindler and the Curator of the Botanical Gardens Mr Musunda along with Ms Nobanda were Organising Notice board signs for the garden. In October the second plant sale was held convened by Mr Richards at the botanical Gardens there was no Show during this sale. On the 28<sup>th</sup> November a breakfast at Ewanrigg was held

There were 178 members

### **2005**

127 members

The AGM was held at the National Botanical Gardens

27 February Breakfast at Ewanrigg.

The new notice sign boards for Botanical Gardens were sponsored by Delta Corporation through Mr. Richard's and Mr. Spindler's organising.

### **2006**

Mr M Harvey replanted the Aloe Garden at the Mukuvisi Woodlands. A plant sale was held at the Botanical Gardens 28<sup>th</sup> May.

November 12 a Symposium was held.

The continuing fuel crisis made functions very unreliable.

A refrigerator that was at the premises of Ian Waters for the storage of cycad pollen which previously was the Cycad Palm Branch property was auctioned off by the Committee. The Committee saw fit to give surplus copies of Excelsa to the National Waste for recycling.

The pollen from the members of the Cycad Branch would be kept at Mr. Malcom Thackray's house.

Mrs V Brown became the functions organiser.

Mr Dave Jordan passed away in 2006. He was born in 1928, he was 77years old at the time of his death. He was responsible for organising the Plant Rallies.

Membership in 2006 was 132.

## **2007**

Mr. Schlachter and Mr Thackray produced a diagram on the Joan Rutherford Garden at the Mukuvisi Woodlands

25<sup>th</sup> of March the AGM was held at Devonia Farm the home of Liz and Dennis Lapham

October 28<sup>th</sup> a plant sale was to be held at the Mukuvisi Woodlands convened by Mr D Richards and Mrs. V Brown was cancelled due to the country's financial crisis.

The Ingens Newsletter was being printed by Prince Edward School at the time as they were cost effective

## **2008**

27<sup>th</sup> April a plant sale was held at the Botanical gardens by the Main Car park

Mrs Lapham and Mr Schlachter resigned from the committee.

Mrs M Childes could not do tea functions anymore and Mrs V Brown took over.

29<sup>th</sup> October sadly Mr. Claude Le Resche passed away

November Symposium was held in the Gazebo at the Zimbabwe German Society and on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December was a Christmas Braai at the Chairman's House – Mr. Spindler

Membership was at 91

## **2009**

29<sup>th</sup> March Voytek Popiel passed away tragically when thieves broke into his house.

Plant Sale was held on 28<sup>th</sup> June at the Botanical Gardens with Mr. D Richards as convener.

A talk by Agriculturalist Dr. Doug McClymont was held at the Zimbabwe German Society and he spoke on *Jathropha*.

Mrs Margaret Patton Childes nee Jamieson passed on 21 August 2009. She was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1924 and was 85 years at the time of her death. Mrs Childes was part of the National Committee for many years and was also a Cycad Branch Secretary.

Membership was 111

## **2010**

The AGM was held on 28<sup>th</sup> March at Mr. N Conlon's Print Works. It was then when it was agreed that the current chairmanship shall be extended by a year. This was the first time that the Chairperson had an official 3-year term.

30 May a Rally was organised by Mr. D Richards involving the Harare Gardens and Sites.

5<sup>th</sup> September a Natural History Symposium was held at the Zimbabwe German Society where a number of speakers talked on various subjects.

The Plant Sale was held at the Botanical Gardens on 30 October.

## **2012**

David John Richards passed away on 12 January, he was born in Mutare on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1925. He was 86 years at the time of his death. His last bush trip for plants in Habitat was done on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2011 with Mr. MJ Kimberley and Mr. M Spindler.

Rosemary Catherine Kimberley nee Lighton passed away 22 April she was born on 11 March 1937

## **2014**

Mr. Bill Kinsey and his wife Lynn Kinsey suggested that the Society should host another congress. It was agreed and the Xerophytica Congress came to be. The congress was held from 20 to 24 June 2020 at The Wild Geese Lodge. Mr Kinsey spearheaded the organising with the help of the sub-committee involving:

Mr. M. Thackeray

Mrs. D Richards

Mr. R Jarvis

Mrs C Stutchbury

Mr M Spindler

Over 90 delegates attended. Speakers were:-

Mr N Crouch

Mr E Van Jaarsveld

Mr L Newton

Mr B Van Wyk

Mr. T Mcoy

Mr A oberts

Mr. M Hyde

Mr R Stutchbury

Mr G Le Breton

Mr P Rousseau

Prof. P Voster

Mr A Hankey

Mr R Bekker

Mr T Cole

Mrs B Francis

**Post congress tour** was a visit to Ewanrigg and the next day a visit to the Great Dyke to see the plant life in their natural habitat. Those delegates that did not have to go home went on a tour of the Eastern Highlands. Mr Thackray, Prof. P Foster, Mr. P Rousseau and Mr H Wolbert went to the South of the country to look at *Encephalartos concinnus*.

In the last decade interesting gardens were organised by Ms Houghton. A couple of local Aloe rallies were held. A breakfast and a few braais occurred at Ewanrigg and Botanic gardens.

A trip to the Great Dyke was organised. Our Society joined on a few field trips with the Mountain Club to some spectacular places to camp and view nature at its purist.

The replanting of the Aloe memorial garden at the Mukuvisi Woodlands organised by Mrs. A Maseko and Mr. H Wolbert. A trip to Ruzawi School was organised by the school by one of our Junior members Sean Sagonda as a school project on the capabilities of organising a function.

Aloe name tags meeting took place at the garden of Mrs Caryl Stutchbury and the Rocky Garden of Mr Norman Conlon at Norton near the banks of Lake Chivero.

A succulent garden was established at Twin Rivers School. Organised by the Headmaster, Mr H. Christian, Mr H Wolbert and Mr. M Spindler.

Mr. M. Kimberley remained editor until 2012 when Mr. M Thackray assisted him. In 2013 editing was done by Mr. Kimberley and Mr Thackray assisted by Mr and Mrs Kinsey. In 2014, Mr M Thackray became editor of the Ingens Magazine assisted by Mrs C Stutchbury, Mr R Jarvis and Mr. N Conlon.

In the same year Mr Kinsey compiled a digital monthly newsletter called Ortholopha which proved very popular. The Ingens Magazine saw an evolution in its development under the guide of Mr. M Spindler from a dull A5 printed magazine to a full colour A4 Magazine.

The Committee also purchased a personal PA System for functions and a library was established for Members to borrow books for knowledge advancement. The librarians were Mr. M. Thackray, then Mr. H Wolbert and Mrs G Kujeke is the current librarian.

Closer links involving Cycads at Ewanrigg was organised through Mrs. A Pasipanodya, Mr. H Wolbert, Mr. M. Spindler and Mr. M Thackray. Pollination of Cycad cones were carried out, an endeavour that was continued solely by Mr. M Spindler in the years that followed. A number of Cycad seedlings were produced from this pollination program.

In the first half of the decade the Society sponsored the local botanical gardens with fertiliser and chemicals to maintain our constitutional aims.

Mr Kimberley resigned in 2016 from the committee due to ill-health and sadly passed away on 3 January 2020.

So, good readers, this is the history of our Aloe Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe. There are gaps and information from the Matabeleland Branch during their heydays that have been out of reach hence a lack of historical notes on their operations.

*#staysafe#stayhealthy#stayalive#covid19*

Hans Wolbert