

## CROCUS GROUP BULLETIN No.15

### Hon Secretary's Notes

Rice, not crocuses, would seem to a suitable plant for British gardens, but let us hope for a sunny autumn and spring. The crocus group now has 74 members from 7 different countries and a healthy credit balance. I am sorry we have not yet got around to getting copies of crocus photographs organized, but I hope it can be done by the Spring. Please continue to support our crocus auction, which is what keeps the Group going without a Subscription and please bring any interesting crocuses you have in Flower to any of the meetings so we can all see them.

During the Crocus season I would willingly show anyone my crocuses by arrangement and Mr Ray Cobb of 188, Bramcote Lane, Wollaton, Nottingham, NG8.2QN Telephone Nottingham 281525 who holds the N.C.C.P.G. National collection of crocuses is also prepared to show them to interested members if given due notice. He asks me to point out that the account of his lecture in the BIS species group bulletin bears no relation to what he said. He was promised a copy to correct before publication but this did not happen and the article is full of inaccuracies.

### PROGRAM 1987/88

Saturday 17th October 1987

Mr & Mrs Alan Edwards of TRYFAN, Burney Road, Westhumble, Dorking, Surrey RH5.6AT, have kindly invited us to see their crocuses and other interesting plants. They will provide coffee and biscuits for those arriving at 11.00am. Directions: Motorway travellers leave M25 at exit 9 (Leatherhead) and take A24 towards Dorking. Turn right immediately after Burford Bridge Hotel roundabout into Westhumble Street. Continue up hill passing Boxhill and Westhumble Station and then take second turning left. Our house is first on the left in Burney Road. Parking in Burney Road. (Room for about 12 cars in vicinity of house). If travelling from south or east, take A24 for one mile north of Dorking and turn left (sign for Polesden Lacy). Same directions thereafter. Bring a picnic lunch and you can eat it under cover and talk about crocuses. Telephone Dorking 883775 - please notify them if you intend coming.

Sunday February 28th 1988

Mr & Mrs H. Crook, of 14, The Uplands, Harpenden, Herts. have offered to show us their Crocuses and many other plants, they have collected on their travels. Come at 11 am and they will produce coffee. Bring a packed lunch and afterwards we are invited to visit the nearby garden of Mr & Mrs P. Abbiss. Please notify Mr & Mrs Crook if you intend coming to see their garden. Tel: Harpenden 60267.

Tuesday 22nd March 1988

Crocus lecture by Brian Matthew at 5.30pm in RHS New Hall, followed by an auction of crocus corms in aid of Crocus Group funds. Please support the auction by bringing and buying crocuses.

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Crocus miscellany - Brian Matthew.

It is rather sad when mis-information gets spread around, particularly when it is put into print, for it is there until the end of time and, through plagiarism, is quoted over and over again. A few years ago, before the publication of my Crocus monograph, some young Greek botanists K. Papanicolaou and E. Zacharof collected many very good Crocus herbarium specimens in Northern Greece. A duplicate set of these were sent to Kew for identification and the localities were duly noted for the forthcoming book. Some of the records were new and therefore most interesting and exciting. The findings were published in a paper entitled 'Crocus in Greece', in Botaniska Notiser, Vol. 133, pages 155-163 (1980) and at least two of the localities for C. Cvijicii were subsequently cited in 'The Crocus' in 1982. The co-author of the paper, Eugenia Zacharof, has kindly written to me explaining that some of the records quoted are incorrect, she, I hasten to add, was not responsible for the mistakes which were, I understand, not accidental. For reasons unknown to me some of the localities quoted by K. Papanicolaou were invented and attached to herbarium specimens bearing E. Zacharof's name and collector's numbers. Thus, on page 63 of 'The Crocus', the localities Mt. Varnous and Mt. Ossa must now be excluded from the distribution of C. Cvijicii. Of course this is very irritating, but I feel particularly sorry for Miss Zacharof who was unwittingly involved in such a story.

When working out distribution patterns one relies heavily on herbarium specimens since they are permanent records and you can always check back on the identifications at any time. Specimens actually made in the field are by far the most reliable and it is seldom that mix-ups occur, so these form the basis for any work on distribution patterns. Records based on plants dug up out of flower and brought into cultivation must always be viewed with caution and one must be particularly sceptical if a new and unexpected record, outside the known area of distribution, crops up since it is so easy in a garden situation to get labels mixed, plants seeding into each other etc; I know because it happens to me as well! Thus, if an interesting locality does appear, based on cultivated material, I always try to go, or ask someone else to go, to the site when the plant in question is in flower just to check that that particular species is indeed there. Apart from this, plants do change a little in cultivation and it is important to see them in their wild state and to note variation details of habitat etc before going into print of the subject.

Over the years I have had a good number of examples of 'mix-ups' occurring and I certainly intend to be extremely cautious in future, especially in view of the latest experience quoted above. However, not all wild-collected herbarium specimens are reliable and there are some classical examples of plants which have been described as new species, based upon a mixture of bits and pieces from other species! We have our example in Crocus parviflorus Baker. This was somewhat of a mystery since it could not be re-found in its type locality in the Cilician Taurus. Maw made a nice painting of two complete plants based on the original specimen which was collected in 1876 by Mrs Danford. It was not until I had studied the specimen and got to know the Crocus of the Taurus Mountains that I realised that the C. parviflorus specimen in fact consists of some corms of C. fleischeri and some flowers of C. danfordiae, and that Maw had grafted them together on his painting, a reasonable enough thing to do but in doing so he fell heavily into an awful trap.

Having advised everyone to beware of new localities I will quote a few which have come in!

C. sieberi subsp. atticus. This has been recorded by Prof. Phitos of Patras University growing on the island of Yioura in the N. Sporades group, Greece.

C. etruscus. Collected by Mr. C. Geoffroy near Vezzani on Corsica, a new record for the island but perhaps not very surprising since the area for C. etruscus on the Italian mainland is directly opposite Corsica.

C. scardicus. Peter & Penny Watt of Winchester have found this on Bistra in S. Yugoslavia, south of the Sar Planina which is the classical locality for this species. They note it as growing 'on a flood plain on mossy hummocks' in wet black peat!

C. aereus (C. biliottii). This was formerly known in N. Turkey from the Zigana Pass and Soganli Pass but has now been found on the next pass to the east, in the Ikizdere area, as has incidentally Iris histrioides; the latter was previously only known from Ak Dag much farther to the west near Amasya.

C. cancellatus. In the 1960's Paul Furse collected a variant of Crocus cancellatus in N.W. Iran (No.3396) which subsequently flowered in cultivation and turned out to be a white-anthered plant similar to subsp. pamphylicus. Since there was only one, and there was always the possibility of a muddle having occurred in the bulb frame, I did not pursue this further. Now Henning Christiansen from Portugal has written to say that some Crocus, sent to him as seeds from Tehran Botanic Garden, have now flowered and are white-anthered C. cancellatus. Two collections are involved, one between Saqqez and Sanandaj and the other between Arak and Kuomeyn. Paul Furse's collection was from between Khoi and Julfa; all these areas are in western Iran but a long way apart so this may be quite widespread. If it is subsp. pamphylicus these Iranian records are far removed from the type locality in southern Turkey. Obviously it is necessary to see more material than is at present available but the one chromosome count which has been made for P.F.3396 shows that it is the same as the other collections from S. Turkey,  $2n=12$ , so it seems likely that this is the correct identity of the Iranian plant.

CROCUS GROUP SPRING 1987

This is just a reminder for those of you who never quite got things entered in your 1987 diary.

Sunday, 1st March, 1987

You are welcome to come and see my crocuses, two and a half miles west of Oxford. All grow outside, no hope of a nice warm greenhouse but there are also willows and snowdrops. Come at 11 A.M. - I will provide coffee. Anyone who survives a muddy walk - gumboots essential - can at least eat their packed lunch under cover. Tel.: Oxford 247883. Address: South Hayes, Yarnells Hill, Oxford, OX2 9BG. Map-readers look for Botley/North Hinksey.

Sunday, 8th March, 1987

Mr. R. Cobb who has the N.C.C.P.G. National collection of crocuses, invites us to see them. (He is willing to show them by arrangement on other occasions.) If sent a stamped addressed envelope, he will provide a map showing the route from the M 1. Come at 11 A.M. to Aurelia, 188 Bramcote Lane, Wollaton, Nottingham, **NG8 2QN**. Tel.: Nottingham 281525. Mr. and Mrs. Cobb have kindly offered to produce us coffee on arrival. Part of the collection is in frames and greenhouses so there should be something to see no matter what the weather produces.

Tuesday, 17th March, 1987

Crocus lecture by Brian Mathew entitled "Crocus News and Miscellany" at 5.30 P.M., in R.H.S. New Hall, followed by a sale of crocus corms in aid of Crocus Group funds. Please support the auction by bringing and buying crocuses.

If you have any interesting crocuses in flower at the time of any of these meetings, please bring one, if you can, to show to the rest of us. If you have any to spare, Crocus Group funds would gladly accept the proceeds if you were to hold a small car-boot sale and thus spread round interesting species or varieties.

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