The West Coast Branch of BotSoc was inaugurated on 28 January 2003 at a function in the West Coast Fossil Park at Langebaanweg. The Chairman of the first Committee was Martin Halvorsen, who is still a member of the Committee as the representative of Yzerfontein. The current Chairman, David Wightman, is a past Chairman of BotSoc’s prestigious Flora Conservation Committee.

This Branch is not the most active in terms of meetings as, living as far apart from each other as we do, it is simply impractical. The core role-players representing the area we cover meet at about four outings a year plus the AGM and an organized flower trip to Namaqualand or somewhere of particular interest. These events supply the bonding we have to network and support each other.

What we do
The West Coast Branch undertakes to promote flora conservation in the greater West Coast area. We cover an area of exceptional floral wealth, that includes the Sandveld, patches of the highly threatened Sand Plain Fynbos, as well as what little remains of West Coast Renosterveld, the vegetation that once covered the fertile soils of the Swartland. We encourage members to get involved in education initiatives and in local biodiversity projects and research. Apart from the normal benefits of being a member of BotSoc, there are invitations to visit local sites and attend lectures.

Our Centenary Year
This year, the Centenary year of the existence of the Botanical Society of South Africa, we have asked our Head Office to provide funding to get even more children into the wilds with the added opportunity to actually stay overnight and make the experience more memorable than just a visit to some botanical event or institution.

We have also been promised banners promoting our Society which we will be able to display at shows and other such events. There has also been a request to produce a short video about the Society and the joy of the veld as well as how to get involved if so wished. This will be aimed at 13-year olds, as advised by those involved with training and education.

I firmly believe that a passion or intense interest in anything always has its roots in some event in the past which leaves us with a positive emotion and desire to continue. For example, my mother took me to Jeffrey’s Bay many years ago to collect shells when there was only a small hotel and about five houses. She later became a founder member of the Conchological Society of South Africa and I still collect shells and make figurines from them. (I also remember her resigning after the subs were increased to R10 per annum!) On another occasion, when I was four, we spent a couple of nights next to the beach at Pringle Bay in the bushes before there were any roads on one of her fynbos expeditions. I don’t remember the flowers but clearly recall my misery with the glare and sand in my eyes. Either I have resilience or there was something good as my passion for nature remains intense.

Our youth has become somewhat separated from nature by means of amazing new technologies. It is no fault of theirs and I would not want to take anything away from them. Nevertheless, we can make a difference towards promoting and conserving our natural heritage by providing children with the opportunity to experience a positive, exciting event.

Finally, a sincere thank-you to all the BotSoc members, active or not, as your annual subs provide the infrastructure and funding needed to care for our priceless habitats.

West Coast Branch Centenary Diary

2003
The West Coast Branch of the Botanical Society of South Africa is formed to promote flora conservation in the greater West Coast area.

2010
The first Branch Indaba is held in Cape Town, bringing all the branches together in a single forum.

The West Coast Branch of the Botanical Society extends from Milnerton to Lamberts Bay and from the sea to the mountains in the east, covering Malmesbury through Moorreesburg to Piketberg, down to Velddrif, Dwarskersbos, St Helena Bay, Paternoster, Wedenburg, Saldanha, Langebaan, Hopefield, Darling and Yzerfontein.

Sun 4 August Langebaan Walk to Oosteval 10h00.
Mon 26–Fri 30 August Tour Group to Namaqualand.
Sat 30 August Hopefield Wildflower Show. Hopefield Show Grounds.
Sat 20 September Darling Wildflower Show, Darling Sports Club.
Sun 17 November Year End Social, Blombosch Lapa, 10h30–11h30 for lunch.

ABOVE: A spring flower display near Kamieskroon.