



Berkshire Ornithological Club



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for 2015

8.00pm 18th November 2015 at Room 109 Palmer Building, University of Reading

The President, Neil Bucknell, in the chair and 42 members present

1. **Apologies for absence:** Ted Rogers, John Hobson, Sally Wearing, John Walker
2. **Minutes of meetings held on 19th November 2014 and 4th March 2015:** the minutes were approved and signed by the President.
3. **Matters arising:** There was one item arising from the 2014 AGM AOB – John Hard supplied an email about the RSPB, the MoD and Red Kites.
4. **Honorary Treasurer's Report and the Club Accounts:** Bill Nicoll presented the Treasurer's Report and Accounts. Firstly, he disclosed that the accounts were unaudited. After being reviewed by the committee, they were sent to Donald Reid & Co, who announced that, as there is no requirement by the Charity Commission for these figures to be examined externally, they would not review them without payment this year. BOC meets the requirements to be classed as a small charity because its turnover is under £25,000. This and the revised constitution allow the accounts to be reviewed to a lower standard than "full audit". An internal review is sufficient. Consequently, ex-chairman Colin Wilson has agreed to review the accounts as 'competent person' (still ongoing). The Treasurer declared that the club is solvent and has sufficient reserves for foreseen events.

The Treasurer said that 2014/15 had been a typical year. The only unusual item was a donation of £10,000 from the Birds of Berkshire Atlas Group from the profit from sales of the "Birds of Berkshire". The club can expect a similar amount in FY2015/2016.

He compared the income and expenditure in 2013/14 with that in 2014/15. The main difference is the donation to the conservation fund from the Birds of Berkshire Atlas Group already mentioned. Other donations included £594 from the sale of annual report artworks and royalties on Robert Gillmor's book "Cover Birds". A single report for 2011 was published this year, at a similar cost to the two published in FY 2013/2014. Gift Aid was reclaimed in March and was a typical amount. There was a one off cost of £500 for the design and construction of the club's new look website.

There were no questions and the accounts were accepted unanimously.

The meeting thanked Bill for his work on the accounts this year and previously as he was standing down as Honorary Treasurer.

5. **Election of Officers:** The Committee proposed the following:

Chairman: Vacant.

Hon. Treasurer: Eleanor Pitts.

Hon. Secretary: Sally Wearing.

Both were approved unanimously. The meeting thanked Tim Ball for his work as Chair over the past two years. Neil Bucknell, the President, agreed to stand as Acting Chair.

6. **Election of Ordinary Members of the Committee:** There were two vacancies on the Committee as John Walker and Iain Oldcorn had completed their three year terms. Iain Oldcorn agreed to stay on as Membership Secretary. Only one candidate was proposed and Sue Charnley was elected to Committee unanimously.

7. **Report of Chairman and Officers:**

The President, Neil Bucknell, presented the Report of Chairman and Officers.

Membership: thanks to Iain Oldcorn for his work as Membership Secretary. Membership again had a slight fall-off in the rate of new memberships and some existing memberships had lapsed. Members were encouraged to provide current email addresses.

Meetings and Field trips: a varied programme with a mix of professional speakers and members. Attendance averaged at 52 members per meeting with 7 visitors. The best attended meeting was Emily Joachim's talk on Little Owls, helped by a very good student turnout. Also popular was John Eyre's talk on Heathland Birds. A request was made for donations of suitable items such as books or pictures for raffle prizes. Field trip highlights included the longer trips to Norfolk and Slimbridge and more local trips to Greenham Common and the New Forest.

Thanks was again offered to Ray Reedman for all his efforts on both programmes and a plea was made for volunteers to assist in the planning of both programmes and for walk leaders as Ray would like to reduce his work load.

Building a younger Club: the Club continues to maintain a good relationship with the University Ornithological Society, with thanks to Becky Thomas and Chris Foster and members of the Club are willing to give talks and/or demonstrations to schools and young peoples' clubs. Ideas are welcome on how to develop youth links.

Berkshire Records Committee / Recorder Review: A revised constitution for the Berkshire Records Committee has been drawn up and further meetings are planned with Newbury & District Ornithological Club and the County Recorder. The club would like a more streamlined process for the production of the county report.

The President expressed his thanks to everyone involved in running the Club for their work, in particular to Sally Wearing, the Hon. Sec, and Robin Dryden for acting as Secretary for this AGM.

8. Conservation Report

This was presented by Renton Righelato. He listed the members of the Conservation Committee and the activities carried out by the Club:

- Local Wildlife Sites in association with TVERC – the club has been reviewing local sites and writing criteria for birds. Proposals for new sites include areas of scrub and rank grassland on the Downs, which currently have no Local Wildlife Sites. The club have been working with Natural England on discussions about arable areas, which are not suitable for LWS designation
- Padworth Gravel Pit – the Club has been working with West Berkshire Council and the Canal and Rivers Trust on the possibility of this site becoming a nature reserve.
- Winter Feeding for Tree Sparrows – 5 sites were targeted last winter. No Tree Sparrows were recorded, although good numbers of finches, Reed Buntings and Yellowhammers were seen. This winter two sites will be targeted (University Farm and a site on the Downs). Natural England has other sites that we will monitor.
- Farm Surveys – the Club continues to offer services farmers to do casual or systematic surveys.
- Water Rail Survey – the Club is planning a 2 year survey during March & April.
- Conservation Volunteers – the Club would like to set up a volunteering group and obtain the necessary insurance.

The President expressed his thanks to everyone involved in the conservation activities of the Club, especially Ken Moore for his work with landowners.

9. Birding highlights of 2014/15

A summary of the birding highlights of 2014/15, prepared by Ken Moore, was delivered by Renton Righelato. It was a poor year with the best reported year list just 164 for Roger Stansfield. The summary will be published separately.

10. Any other business:

It was requested that a grid reference be provided in the programme for any meetings at non-standard venues.

The President closed the AGM at 8.40pm; this was followed by a talk from Alan Davies and Ruth Miller on Birding in North Wales.