



# Berkshire Ornithological Club



## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for 2017

8.00pm 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017 at Room 109 Palmer Building, University of Reading

The President, Neil Bucknell, in the chair and 43 members present

1. **Apologies for absence:** Iain and Susan Oldcorn, Maggie and David Chopping, Elaine Butler, Peter Hutchins.
2. **Minutes of AGM held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016:** the minutes were approved and signed by the President.
3. **Matters arising:** None.
4. **Honorary Treasurer's Report and the Club Accounts:** these were presented by Eleanor Pitts. As allowed under the Club's Constitution, the accounts had been reviewed by Phil Caunt, who had not made any comments.

The Treasurer reported that 2016-17 had been a typical year in most respects. There had been a small surplus of income over expenditure.

The only exceptional income was £2,000, which was a restricted donation for the Fobney Island Ecology Project. General donations were lower than in 2015-16.

The biggest expenditure was £2,459.16 for hiring the meeting room at the University. This was lower than last year as Ray had been able to negotiate a small reduction. One bird report had been published, with two planned for the next financial year in order to reduce the backlog.

Eleanor thanked those who had made donations to the Club, including Robert Gillmor for royalties from his book "Cover Birds", Ray Reedman for donating his speaker fees, members who had given talks free of charge, members who added donations to their annual subscriptions and those who made other donations.

There were no questions and the accounts were accepted unanimously.

The President thanked Eleanor for her work, not only keeping the accounts but also doing battle with those who held the Club's money.

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

Chairman: Richard Stansfield

Hon. Treasurer: Eleanor Pitts

Hon. Secretary: Sally Wearing

The President explained that the Committee had co-opted Mike Turton as Chairman, but he had decided not to stand for election. However, Richard Stansfield, who had previously been co-opted as Chairman, was willing to return.

The Chairman, Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary were all unopposed and therefore elected.

The meeting thanked Mike, Eleanor and Sally for their work during the last year.

6. **Election of Ordinary Members of the Committee:** there was one vacancy on the Committee and one nomination, Ken Moore, who was elected unanimously.
7. **Report of Chairman and Officers:** this was presented by the outgoing Chairman, Mike Turton.  
**Membership:** the slow downward trend from last year had continued; there were 288 members at the start of the 2017-18 season. This had decreased the income from subscriptions, which was also reducing due to more members opting for "retired" status. Members did not always advise the Club of changes to email addresses, making it difficult to keep in touch.  
**Review:** falling membership numbers and other concerns had resulted in the Committee asking Mike Turton, Jake Bishop and Adrian Lawson to review how the Club operates. They had made

an initial report to the Committee, but the review is still ongoing. One issue already identified is that the Club is not good at publicising its activities and more volunteers are needed to do this.

**Indoor meetings:** there had been 12, plus the photographic competition and an ID workshop. They included travelogues and input from top scientists. Attendance was slightly higher than in 2015-16, with the highest number at David Lindo's talk on urban wildlife. There were fewer visitors during the year and members were encouraged to bring non-members to meetings. Mike thanked Ray for organising many excellent talks over the last 13 years. Sue Charnley will take over from him for the 2018/19 season. Neil praised Ray for the good reputation the Club has for its meetings. The meeting thanked Ray.

**Field trips:** there had been 20, including coach trips, Sunday trips by car, mid-week walks and two long weekends in East Anglia, plus the trip to the Birdfair. Members coming on trips were encouraged to share cars as much as possible. The range of trips was due to a nucleus of dedicated leaders, but new input was needed, including a new co-ordinator. More volunteers would help; even leading just one walk would make a big difference.

**Annual reports:** the 2013 report had been published, and the reports for 2014 and 2015 were being prepared, to be published together in 2018.

**Recording:** a working group had reviewed how to make the Berkshire bird records database more useful and accessible. Except for a small number of sensitive breeding species, it is now available to everyone on the BOC's website. Thanks were given to the group: Richard Burness, Neil Bucknell, Robert Godden, Marek Walford and Renton Righelato.

**Conservation:** Mike included a brief summary, as Renton had covered this topic at the last indoor meeting. The BOC actively and successfully fought a proposed housing development at Theale, which threatened one of the UK's biggest Nightingale strongholds, and has been working to improve the protection of a number of other important bird sites. The 2017 Water Rail survey will be repeated in 2018, plus there will be a survey for the rapidly declining Little Grebe. With the Canal and Rivers Trust, the BOC is planning a new nature reserve at Padworth.

**Newsletter:** Mike thanked Ted Rogers for his sterling work editing the newsletter for the last 20 years. Neil echoed this. Ted was thanked by the meeting. Iain Oldcorn is the new editor.

**President:** Neil Bucknell has decided not to stand for re-election when his term of office comes to an end in January. Mike thanked him for his long term support for the BOC. The Committee have appointed Renton Righelato as the new President. He is eminently qualified for the post: professionally, as a life-long birdwatcher and through his past and present involvement with the BOC and conservation in Berkshire. Renton said that following Neil would be a very hard act, and the Club owes Neil a great debt to for his work. Neil was thanked by the meeting.

## 8. **Birding highlights of 2016-17**

A description of the birding highlights from December 2016 to November 2017, prepared by Ken Moore, was delivered by Renton Righelato. It had been a good year, judging by the length of the report. Ken's joint birds of the year were Hawfinch and Parrot Crossbill. The summary will be published separately.

## 9. **Any other business:** None.

The President closed the AGM at 8:39pm; it was followed by a talk from Mike Lane called "A Lane in a Midlands Forest", showing the wildlife of an area of new and old forest in Warwickshire. .