



Berkshire Ornithological Club



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2025

7.30pm 19th November 2025, held at Reading University and on Zoom

The President, Debby Reynolds (DR), in the chair and 53 members present both in person and on Zoom.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Sally Wearing, David and Nancy Massie, Andrew Harrison, Gray Burfoot and Judith Clark.
2. **Minutes of the AGM held on 4th December 2024:** the minutes were approved via a show of hands and online vote and will be signed by the Chair.
3. **Matters arising:** None.
4. **Honorary Treasurer's Report and the Club Accounts:** these were presented by Edwin Bruce-Gardner (**EB-G**). The accounts were circulated before the meeting and will be available on the Club's website.

EB-G thanked Martin Newell for examining our accounts.

DR thanked **EB-G** for his clear accounts which were accepted via a show of hands and an online poll. There were no questions.

5. **Election of Executive Officers:** The Committee proposed the following:
Chair – Robin Dryden Treasurer – Edwin Bruce-Gardner Secretary – Jane Campbell

They were all elected via a show of hands and an online poll.

6. **Election of Ordinary Members of the Committee:** there are six elected Ordinary Members. This year there were three vacancies, one due to Robin Dryden's appointment as Chair, the remaining two because of the retirement of Robert Godden and Elaine Charlson. **DR** thanked Robert and Elaine for their contributions.

The nominations from the Committee were Sally Wearing and Angela Gunn. Both were elected via a show of hands and an online poll.

7. **Report of Chairman and Officers:** **DR** presented the Chair's and officers' reports. The full written report will be published via the Club's website.

Chair's Report – presented by DR

This was my third year as Chair and therefore my last. It was an honour to be elected Chair of our Club. As usual, there has been more to do than time available. Although I am standing down as chair, I will continue my work as the Managing Editor of our reports, as well as being involved in running our hybrid meetings and other issues.

We have had two major changes on the committee in the last year. As well as being Publicity Officer, Peter Driver has taken over the task of organising the outdoor programme from Robert Godden. We are very grateful for this. And Iain Oldcorn, our longstanding Membership Secretary, decided to stand down. We owe him many thanks for having carried out this vital role successfully for the last 13 years. We are delighted that Angela Gunn has agreed to take the role on and we welcome her to the Committee.

We are always looking for volunteers to help run the Club; we have a range of tasks that need doing, so any help is welcome, from a few hours to taking on a specific role.

Membership

Overall membership numbers have continued to slowly reduce. We have seen minor cost savings as the number of members who do not provide an email address has declined. The continued, and increasing, use by members of the costly and fragile CAF Donate route for their annual membership payments is becoming unsustainable. We are looking into a replacement for CAF donate.

The simplification and consolidation of the handling of all aspects of our permits to visit Queen Mother Reservoir and liaison with Thames Water have been useful. Peter Newbound is our QMR Officer, managing the whole process.

For the 2025-6 membership year, we are moving our membership database to a service called Membermojo.

We have decided to give free membership to anyone under 25.

Programme

The Indoor Programme

We have had another good season of talks, from Norfolk to Southern Ecuador and from Peregrine Falcons to Tree Sparrows. We were grateful to Colin Wilson for standing in at very short notice when Professor Tim Birkhead pulled out of his Great Auk talk in March.

We used a new location at the University, room G44 in Edith Morley, when Palmer 109 was not available, which afforded a different atmosphere but was comfortable and 'friendly'! It was particularly well suited to the Christmas Social.

Attendances from members continued to slowly rise and are almost back to pre-Covid numbers. Zoom is well-used and more students are showing interest in some of the talks.

Sue Charnley, our Indoor Programme Secretary, continued to provide ever popular refreshments of juice and biscuits. She also provided a wonderful seasonal spread for the Christmas Social.

The Outdoor Programme

Peter Driver is now Outdoor Programme Secretary. The programme has run successfully over the last year, with a full programme of trips to birding sites in Berkshire and further afield. We are grateful to all the organisers for leading some very good visits and giving our members some excellent birding experiences.

Bob Lyle continued his joint NDOC/BOC Monday trips, fortnightly from September to April. Peter Driver has continued the monthly Saturday morning 'Intro to Berkshire birding' walks. Popular features in the programme included: the January coach trip to Slimbridge; the early morning birdsong walk in May; the minibus trip to Global Bird Fair at Rutland Water; and the evening walk on the Downs in June. There was a very successful residential trip to Somerset in February 2025.

Our day trips continue to be free of charge and open to all, as part of the Club's educational charitable object. They usually attract between eight and sixteen attendees, with several new members joining during the year.

Publicity Report

The Club's activities are promoted through our website and social media outlets. Indoor and outdoor meetings are featured in regular mailings from our Membership Secretary. The talks programme is also advertised through the Reading Arts and Culture website *WhatsOnReading*. Elaine Charlson has been a great help with poster design this year.

In January 2025, a few Committee members staffed the BOC stand at the inaugural Wild Tilehurst Nature Fair.

We gave BOC's new gazebo its first outing at Earley Green Fair.

In addition to the website, BOC has an online presence on Facebook, Instagram and Bluesky. Members who use social media are reminded to tag BOC in any of their bird-related posts, using hashtag #berksbirds for local sightings so we can share and repost where appropriate. We also publicise the club's activities through the popular Berkshire Birds Facebook group.

Editorial Board

The 2020 report was published and distributed at the start of the year. It was the last one to have one of Robert Gillmor's artworks on the front cover.

We are currently checking the 2021 publisher's draft.

Robert Godden, the scientific editor, has made good progress with the species accounts for the 2022 report. We plan to publish the 2022 and 2023 reports jointly, as has often been done in the past.

The Berkshire Birding Site Guide is being re-issued.

Conservation Sub-committee

During the year we continued to engage with the process of formulating a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Berkshire, participating in working groups producing a list of priority species and of priority conservation measures, mapping the latter where appropriate. The strategy was adopted by the six Berkshire local authorities to fulfil their obligations under the Environment Act 2021, and it was launched publicly at the Newbury Show in September. It can now be found on the Windsor and Maidenhead Council website. It is a substantial document in three parts. The Club's contribution is acknowledged, both as participant in the process and in providing sources of information, notably Renton Righelato's publication *Berkshire's Birdscapes*. The Padworth Lane project has made disappointing progress. Ken Moore found a local farmer willing to do work on the site, and there has now been a helpful suggestion by the CRT that the Club makes an interim partnership arrangement with them to enable some works on site. This is being progressed.

Little progress has been made with a possible new scheme for a small wetland at Streatley. We have completed a third round of farm surveys for the Sulham Estate, helping them to establish baseline information in connection with wilding and biodiversity net gain projects on the estate and to monitor the effect of the creation of a new wetland by the railway just outside Pangbourne

Patrick Crowley has continued co-ordinating efforts to monitor Peregrine breeding sites and liaison with their owners. Two grants have been made from the Conservation Fund towards these efforts, one for a monitoring camera at Newbury, the other to fund a new box ready for use at the next site where it appears that a box is needed to encourage breeding.

We also made a grant to Lavell's Wetland Trust from the Conservation Fund, for the provision of a tern raft at Lea Farm Lake. Please remember that we do have funds available for small grants so please contact Neil Bucknell, the Chair of the Conservation Sub-committee if you have a suitable project seeking support.

Thanks

DR thanked committee members for their hard work and contributions over the last year. Thanks were also given for the tremendous amount of work Sally Wearing performed as Chair.

Any other Business

None.

Refreshments were served followed by a talk by Simon Booker titled, 'Strictly Nature'.

Jane Campbell, 27/11/2025