

HEREFORDSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

Minutes of the 68th Annual General Meeting held at Holmer Parish Centre on 8^h March 2018

Present: (28 members) Judy Allen; John Birkinshaw; Mick Colquhoun; Russel Davies; Norman Fincham; S.E. Griffin; Susanna Grunsell; Rachel Jenkins; David Macken; Una & Gareth Morgan; Helen Osborn; Gerald Parker; John Pullen; Viv Quinn; Frances Riddell; Chris Robinson; Robert Taylor; Sheila & Maurice Taylor; Tom & Jennifer Weale; Gerald Wells; Roger White; Jim Wilkinson; Phil & Chris Williams; Graham Wren

1. Apologies: Chris Bartlett; Dennis Chapple; Steve Coney; Mervyn Davies: Nicky Davies; Geoff Davis; Ann Dex; Tony Eveleigh; Terry Foxton; Bob Hall; Moira Kitchen; Bill Laws; Mary MacKay ;Chris & Keith Mason; Astrid Mick;

Tessa Minns; Geoffrey Phillips; Dick & Jenny Ray; Wendy Rushton; Fiona Shutler; Nick Smith

2. Minutes of the 67th Annual General meeting held on 9th March 2017 at Holmer

These had been sent to all members.

3. Adoption of the minutes

Proposer John Pullen Seconded Peter Eldridge. These were adopted without dissent.

4. The Chairman's Report Gerald Wells

"Tonight I step down as Chairman, so I reflect not only on last year but on the three years of my office. The time has gone by rather quickly which means I was either enjoying myself or experiencing the acceleration of time that comes with advancing age. That aside I'm very grateful for the support I have had from the President and the Committee throughout my time in office. John Pullen also steps down as President this evening and I would like to say a special thank you to him for his lively and provocative leadership in so many club activities. His legendary detection and identification of bird song is but one aspect of his long and valued contribution to the Club. I would also like to pay a tribute to the essentially female team who, in the background, seamlessly organize the indoor meeting reception, the draw, the teas and, tonight, the dutch supper.

What have we achieved in the past three years? Foremost in my mind is the progress we have made in improving the standard of the Annual Report. In 2017, the 2015 Annual Report gained praise from the BTO and BirdGuides called it "a top-quality bird report". The essential editorial expertise has been key but several other factors have contributed to this success. Improvements in data handling, utilisation of the BTO BirdTrack (from 2013) as our main recording database, review of the county status of species and of place names has benefitted the Systematic List. A review also of the county bird list, including researching museum specimens and historical documents has given a definitive bench mark for the county avifauna. A broad spectrum of review articles and high quality illustrations has completed the picture. My thanks go to all who have contributed to the Annual Report.

We have also put our house in order in that we have made a concerted effort to collect together, catalogue and archive all available Club documents for safe keeping at the Herefordshire Records and Archive Centre.

Our degree of collaboration with the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust has been enhanced considerably, with consultation in relation to management of sites and substantial financial contributions to projects. To make a mark on conservation in the county a small club like this must cooperate with other like minded bodies.

In addition to our contribution to the national birding database via BirdTrack we have also maintained our support for BTO surveys, which, in addition to the core surveys have, over the past three years, included the House Martin survey and currently the Curlew breeding survey. Further work has been directed toward determining the use of local churches by Swifts and we have an ongoing project which seeks to replicate a

local farmland bird survey carried out 50 years ago. This year initiatives in nest recording and a Sandmartin survey are proposed.

To help members access the county's best birding sites we have embarked on a project to roll out a series of site guides, which will appear in the HOC News and feature on the website.

We also carried out an online members' survey which, as well as confirming a high degree of satisfaction with most aspects of the club's activities provided guidance on improving many areas. One theme emerging from the survey was that members would like more information and tuition on bird identification; something that we want to progress in conjunction with the BTO..

It is time to upgrade our website and embrace more the useful aspects of social media and a project is ongoing which aims to have a new website operational by Jan 2019.

We are also considering a change to the charitable status of the club from an unincorporated to an Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as this would offers advantages of operation, notably enabling us to own land and give limited liability to trustees. This will be further explored by the Committee.

I hope that so far this report conveys achievement and progress, but there is another aspect to the Club. The HOC is rather like nature itself – fragile, vulnerable and even at risk. Foremost of these weaknesses is the struggle that your Committee has to find volunteers to fill essential roles. When a member fulfills a particular role for several years we are lulled into a false sense of security as everything ticks along in the background. Last year Gerald Parker stepped down after 6 years as an excellent field meetings organizer and the role is still vacant. If it cannot be filled, field meetings will cease at the end of this year. Similarly, since 2011 Ian and Natalie Buttriss have done a splendid job running HOC's GardenBirdwatch and now with other pressures on their time we are seeking a successor. Otherwise, it will not be possible to maintain this Club activity.

Each year we also have difficulty in finding members to fill vacancies on Committee. Next year we will be seeking to fill the Treasurer and Secretary positions on Committee.

The membership survey highlighted one of the biggest factors, in these difficulties and that was the disturbing demography of the club with only 4% of the membership under 45 years of age. Attracting young members is a priority for the survival of the HOC and I hope that recent initiatives can be taken forward.

I'm sorry to conclude this report on such a low note, but I want to leave you with the thought that while the HOC has strengths, particularly in its county bird recording functions it also has weaknesses which threaten its very existence in its present form. I know tonight I am preaching to the converted as most of you have past and present contributed much to the Club, but the future of HOC depends on new ideas and a greater support from the wider membership."

5. The President's address John Pullen

The President re-iterated the Chairman's thanks to all who help run the HOC. He thanked the Chairman for all his hard work and commitment. He stressed the urgent need for someone to take on the role of field meeting organiser to work with the planning team.

6. Treasurer & Membership Secretary's Report

Jim Wilkinson thanked the auditor Ian Roe. The accounts had been distributed to all. There was a surplus of £2845 slightly down from the previous year as we are no longer selling atlases. Indoor meeting attendance is down slightly but we are covering costs. The Annual Report was a reduced cost after tendering but the quality was good. Hand delivery by members saved a substantial amount. Finances are in good order with £34,000 in reserves. Last year we gave large donations to Herefordshire Wildlife Trust for the new hide at Bodenham which is well used and for Inad on the Lower Lugg Meadows He is budgeting £6,000 for the new website. The subscription rates will remain the same.

Membership: at the end of 2017 there were 294 subscriptions equating to 380 individual members; there had been 10 new members since the beginning of December, including 1 or 2 under 45 years.

The acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Maurice Taylor and seconded by Sue Griffin and carried unanimously

7. Election of Officers and committee

The posts as below were up for re-election at this AGM

Nominations received before the AGM were

President: Gareth Morgan (proposer Nick Smith, seconder Tom Weale)

Vice President: Gerald Wells (proposer Nick Smith, seconder Tom Weale)

Chairman: Susanna Grunsell (proposer Nick Smith, seconder Gareth Morgan)

Vice Chairman; Robert Taylor (proposer Nick Smith, seconder Tom Weale)

Meetings (speaker administration) Rachel Jenkins (proposer Nick Smith, seconder Tom Weale)

Ordinary Committee member: Viv Quinn (proposer Jim Wilkinson, seconder Una Morgan)

No nominations were received for Outdoor Meeting organiser, Publicity Officer or Conservation Liaison Officer

The block vote was proposed by Frances Riddell, seconded by John Pullen and agreed unanimously.

8 Appointment of Auditor

Ian Roe was proposed as auditor by Jim Wilkinson seconded by Gareth Morgan. Carried unanimously.

9 Motions from the committee

None was proposed

10 Any Motion from any member

None was received.7.55pm

The meeting was followed by a Dutch supper and Mick Colquhoun showed some of the best photos from members during the year and Gerald Wells identified various penguin species from his travels and Sue Griffon showed some pictures of birds encountered on a visit to Lanzarote.

Una Morgan 14 March 2018