

# **DORSET BRANCH OF BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION**

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at Puddletown Village Hall**

### **1. Welcome by the Chairman and Apologies**

The Chairman, Nigel Spring, welcomed approximately 74 members and friends present. He gave a particular welcome to Peter Madison, chair of the Suffolk Branch, as a visitor. Apologies had been received from Katherine Boys, Richard and Kathy Clarke, Robin George, and Joan Durran and Tony Long. Nigel paid tribute to all the work that the Clarks had done over many years in ordering stock for the Sales Stall, this had made a huge contribution to the success of the stall. They are retiring for health reasons and a card was circulating in the hall for members to sign to thank them and wish them well for the future.

### **2. Minutes of Last AGM (21.03.15)**

The minutes had been circulated at the meeting. A motion that they be accepted as a correct record was proposed by Keith Howland and seconded by Richard Norman. This was passed unanimously and they were signed by the Chairman.

### **3. Matters Arising**

**The Newsletter.** Guy Freeman has edited the Newsletter for over three years whilst he has been studying. Nigel explained that he was not a committee member and we had gained the feeling that he would like to be relieved of the task if another editor could be found. Guy was thanked for all the work he had done in producing issues of the Newsletter during this period. We are fortunate that Jane Smith has agreed to take over from him and Nigel thanked her for agreeing to assume the role of editor. The committee intends to give further consideration to the Newsletter's production as printing costs are quite expensive (particularly if colour is used) and it is available online. A number of members receive it in that form already and it would save money if more were to do so.

### **4. Chairman's Report**

Nigel said it was good to see such a large turnout at the meeting. Butterfly Conservation is still a relatively small conservation organisation, but is extremely effective for its size. The Dorset Branch now has around 840 members. Quite a few newcomers join as a result of taking part in the Big Butterfly Count and, as they receive free membership for the first year, the branch does not get any income from them for that period.

The committee has discussed the most appropriate time of year to hold the AGM. Until fairly recently it was held in the autumn, but that is a busy time of year and some of the reports on the butterfly season might not be completed in time. In the past few years it has been moved to a date in February or March, but this means that the accounts for the financial year ending the previous March are rather out of date and the new butterfly season is about to start. It is difficult to find a way of synchronising the reports etc. in relation to the financial year.

Several reports are available on the Branch's activities: the Records Officer's report, work on the four BC reserves, educational visits, the Sales and Display stall and the Website. Electronic

copies are available and these can be requested by signing a form at the entrance to the hall.

Nigel pointed out that much of the Branch's income comes from grants for our reserves, e.g. Higher Level Stewardship. These will reduce and come to an end with the completion of contracts in 2018. In addition, payments for the Educational Access Scheme may be cut. He thought that we need to find imaginative ways to raise funds and it would be great if someone would volunteer to develop ideas for fundraising. Some have been successful in the past, e.g. obtaining grants from Waitrose. If anyone was interested or had relevant experience, he asked them to come forward.

Nigel commented that it had been a strange winter, today is one of the coldest days. Already this year a few Brimstones and Peacocks have been disturbed on work parties and a Dormouse was running around at Lankham Bottom. Adders and frogs have also been seen. Bill Shreeves's report tells us about what happened last year, and Nigel has some very happy memories - wonderful Brown Hairstreaks and White Admirals at Alner's Gorse and two Marsh Fritillary larval webs there too, the first since 2012. If a prediction by Matthew Oates is right, 2016 is going to be bumper year for butterflies, coming exactly 40 years after the amazing 1976 heat wave. We will have to wait to see what the season brings.

Nigel said the Branch was very grateful to all its the volunteers for their dedication and hard work. Special thanks should go to Bridget de Whalley who is stepping down as co-ordinator of the Sales and Display stall after many years' incredible effort. Sadly, so far no one has offered to take her place, but we hope to find a small group of people to take the stall to events in their area with one of them co-ordinating the stock and handovers. Nigel also made particular mention of Bob Steedman who is leaving the committee, but will continue to co-ordinate some moth activities for the Branch. Roger Smith is disposing of his extensive library of books on butterflies and other wildlife and has very generously offered to give the proceeds from their sale to Branch funds. At a fundraising event last October in Poole (a joint event with RSPB), £156 was raised in this way and the sales from today's book stall will also go to the Branch.

Rex Bale has kindly offered to raise funds for the Branch through a presentation of an audio-visual show in the cinema at Athlehampton House which will be combined with a free visit to the gardens and house. This will take place on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September with a presentation in the morning for regular volunteers in recognition of their work for the Branch.

Nigel expressed the wish that that we can look forward to another busy and productive year.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

Georgie Laing presented the Branch's accounts for the year to the end of March 2015. She had taken over as treasurer in February 1015 so she thanked Allan Higgin for keeping the books for most of the financial year. The accounts have been audited at HQ so there is no need for them to be checked by a scrutineer. She informed the meeting that summary accounts were available for Income & Expenditure. Balance Sheet, Sales Stall Trading Account and Restricted Fund Statement.

In relation to expenditure, Georgie highlighted that 70% goes on direct conservation work. The cost of servicing the membership - meetings, the Newsletter etc. - amounting to £1,910 represents 47% of subscription income.

The main source of income is payments from Natural England for conservation work at Alner's Gorse and Lankham Bottom. These come to us via HQ who administer the funds jointly with

those for other branches and payments are usually late and erratic. There have also been changes to the way the Rural Payments Agency administers the scheme for paying grants and a dispute involving the Basic Payments Scheme with one of the sites has resulted in all payments to Butterfly Conservation being withheld until the issue is resolved. The first instalment of the Higher Level Stewardship payment that we were due was only received yesterday.

The Sales Stall brought in £1,109 and it also fulfils valuable educational and publicity functions. Georgie thanked Bridget de Whalley and the team of volunteers who have attended a number of events around the county. Bridget has done an amazing job in taking it to so many places, but now that she is standing down someone is needed to replace her as co-ordinator of the Display and Sales Stall. Any one person might not be able to do so much, but the task could be shared between several people.

Lyn Pullen's plant sales raised £815 and she was thanked for this wonderful effort. The Fox & Hounds pub at Cattistock gave us £400 from collections and this was used to improve disabled access at Lankham Bottom. We received £214 from the collection at Patrick Barkham's lecture at Thomas Hardy School, Dorchester and Derek Fowler donated the takings from his sales of cards amounting to £141.

The Balance Sheet closed the year with a healthy sum of £18,000 that puts us in a good position at the start of the current financial year in which we have budgeted for expenditure of over £21,000..

Lawrie de Whalley raised an issue about the expenditure of around £11,000 of the grant income as what it was spent on was not specified. He thought that some sites in receipt of grants were not doing so well as areas managed by voluntary work and he asked for more information to be given in next year's accounts. Georgie explained that the accounts can only show financial transactions and that most of the sum referred to by Lawrie was for contract work.

A motion to adopt the accounts was proposed by John Boys and seconded by Keith Howland. It was passed unanimously.

## **6. Election of Officers**

**Secretary:** Adrian Neil, proposed by Sylvia Dicker, seconded by Colin Burningham. All in favour.

## **7. Election of Committee Members**

Keith Howland, proposed by Bridget de Whalley, seconded by John Winterbotham. All in favour.

Jane Smith (as Newsletter Editor). proposed by Lynda Lambert, seconded by Lyn Pullen. All in favour.

## **8 Any Other Business.**

**The Website.** Nigel Spring said that the Website makes a huge difference to the Branch's activities and all that we do. Lyn Pullen and her team of helpers have done a wonderful job in getting it so up-to-date in respect of events and other information.

**The Records Officer's Report.** Bill Shreeves said that his report on 2015 was available. It had been such a chaotic year in terms of the weather and seasons that it was difficult to know what to say about it. It was virtually impossible to find a butterfly species that was a clear winner although there were plenty of losers. He encouraged people to come to the regional meetings to find out more. However, if anyone had done a transect walk and would be unable to get to one of them, he had copies of the results that he could give them. He also had copies of the report on The State of UK Butterflies if anyone would like one. An Atlas for the period 2010-2014 is being prepared and it will appear in stages on the website.

Looking to recording in the future, he hoped that existing recorders will continue and that others would like to start. Booklets are available on recording methods and an Identification Day will be held at Cerne Abbas on 21<sup>st</sup> May for anyone who would like to improve their skills. Butterflies have already started to appear this year and the top species in terms of numbers has most surprisingly been Painted Lady. Brimstone, Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell have also been seen. Bill thanked everyone who had sent in records for 2015 and the team who do all the computer work, in particular Martin Raper and Bernard Franklin. He was also grateful to Lyn Pullen and others who put records on the website and to Adrian Neil who has taken over garden recording and the Wider Countryside Survey. His final message was, 'go out and record!'

The meeting closed at 2.42 p.m.