

# **THE DORSET BRANCH OF BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION**

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2014 At Puddletown Village Hall**

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

The Chairman, Jane Smith, welcomed the approximately 65 members and friends present. She explained that technically it was the AGM for the financial year 2012/13. Apologies had been received from Myra Sealy, Chris Morgan, Gordon Hopkins, Kate Boys and Alison Neil.

### **2. Minutes of Last AGM (23.03.13)**

These had been circulated at the meeting. They were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **3. Matters Arising**

None.

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

Jane Smith noted that last summer had been better than in recent years with less rainfall. We tend to remember the good weather, but in fact it was only July that was warmer and sunnier than average. Overall 2013 was a good year for butterflies as Bill Shreeves' report (available at the meeting) indicated, with many species doing well, particularly from July onwards.

The normal range of events had taken place: guided walks, visits to reserves, the display stall attending various shows and fairs and butterfly ID courses. There had been a lot of hard work put in throughout the year by members to maintain and improve sites and she was very grateful for the help given to butterflies and moths. There has been a big effort at events in trying to interest children and in particular Jane thanked Bridget de Whalley and her team on the display stall. The hope is that children will come back to the interest later in their lives.

Turning to internal Branch matters, Jane reported that the website has been improving steadily over the last year or two, thanks to Lyn Pullen's expert management. In particular, the online reporting facility has been very successful with several thousand records coming in that way. The website is continuing to evolve and develop with thought now being given to how to interest and involve members more. The importance of social media has been recognised with access to Facebook and Twitter being available from the website's home page. This provides a means of finding out quickly what is going on, especially regarding new sightings, and is a good way of communicating, particularly with young people.

It had been decided last year to publish two issues of the Newsletter each year rather than three, not only to reduce costs, but partly because the timing of the Spring and Autumn issues did not fit in well with the recording cycle. This year the next issue of the Newsletter will come out in April, but a separate Butterfly Report will be able to include reports from all the county recording methods and it is hoped to be able to publish it in the early summer.

Jane asked for views from the meeting on two matters. Firstly whether to move towards making

the Newsletter only available in electronic form. It is already available online, but there has not been very much take-up of this option. The advantages are that there would be a considerable saving if many members received it in this way, thus enabling more of the Branch's funds to be available for conservation, and also that illustrations can be in colour. However, a lot of people prefer to receive a paper copy. Joan Durran asked whether there would be access to back copies if the Newsletter were just available online. Lyn Pullen said that she is putting each issue on the website as it appears, but she may be able to work back to earlier ones.

A straw poll indicated that there was a majority against moving to an entirely electronic publication, but Jane said that in any case a paper version would continue to be produced for the time being. In future copies will be mailed out from Head Office and this will save on postage. It was pointed out by Bobby Knowles that the print costs per copy would increase if the number printed were reduced.

The second, related, question was whether to use colour in the printed copies of the Newsletter. Some branches have full colour, others have it just on the cover on one or two sides. A cover in colour on one side would increase the cost of production by about £100, on two sides by £200. These represented increases on the current cost of 40% and 70% respectively. A large majority in the meeting was against having the front and back covers in colour and seemed happy with the present appearance. However, Nigel Spring thought that it might not attract new members and Richard Belding suggested that a small number could be produced in colour for promotional purposes. Bobby Knowles pointed out that branches that make extensive use of colour usually obtain sponsorship for it or else have contacts in the print industry. Lawrie de Whalley said that he had been at a meeting where one branch reported that it had saved £2,000 per year by going over to electronic distribution. Richard Belding pointed out that the question of production costs in relation to the size of the Branch was complicated by the fact that we did not receive any initial contribution from 'free' membership offers for joining Butterfly Conservation and there has been quite a large increase in the size of the Branch in the last year or so. Georgie Laing asked about the position regarding VAT on electronic copies and Jane replied that Head Office was investigating this with HMRC.

Jane closed the discussion by saying that it had been useful to hear members' views. There are no easy solutions, but the committee will go on considering the matter. She felt that the Newsletter is an important way of communicating what is going on and in making members feel part of the organisation. She echoed a point made by Bobby Knowles that it does, however, need a good supply of contributions from members.

Jane announced that two members of the committee were retiring at the end of their terms of office. Mark Spencer, President of the Bournemouth Natural Science Society, had been elected to foster closer working links with the Branch, but is not able to come to committee meetings. She thanked him for his support of the Branch and hoped that the link would be maintained, particularly through holding joint events. Gordon Hopkins has acted as Moth Co-ordinator, but has recently suffered from health problems and feels unable to remain on the committee. He has been a valuable member of both the committee, the Branch and Butterfly Conservation more widely and has co-ordinated the transect at Fifehead. His expertise and humour will be missed and Jane thanked him for his contribution and hard work. He hopes to continue to support the work of Branch as much as he is able to. In his place Bob Steedman was co-opted on to the committee during the year and is standing for election today.

Jane concluded her report by thanking everyone who had helped her on the committee and in the Branch, including those who carry out conservation and monitoring work and run the sales stall. Some members who are not on the committee carry out specific roles: Guy Freeman - Newsletter Editor, Arthur Bryant - Events Co-ordinator and Kathy & Richard Clarke who manage purchases

for the sales stall. They are all key to making the Dorset branch one of the more active branches of Butterfly Conservation. Jane finally made a plea for more members to come forward to serve on the committee. The treasurer, Allan Higgin, is willing to be re-elected again today, but would like to stand down before the end of his next three-year term and she would welcome any offers to take on that or any other role. She would be pleased if anyone interested would approach her.

## 5. Treasurer's Report

A summary of the Branch accounts was circulated at the meeting. The Treasurer, Allan Higgin reminded the meeting that the accounts were for the financial year 2012 /13. They have been audited at Head Office and examined by our scrutineer.

Total income was just under £20,000 and expenditure a little over £24,400, leaving an excess of expenditure over income of £4,500. Unrestricted Income was £12,000 less than in the previous year, this was due partly to a one-off payment of £9,000 for work at Alner's Gorse and Lankham Bottom in the previous year and also to a problem at Head Office with Single Farm Payments, meaning that money could not be paid to the Branch until it had been sorted out. This has now happened so we will be receiving around £6,000. In the meantime Allan has had to keep a close eye on expenditure.

The Sales Stall again did very well, bringing in just under £1,000 and thanks are due to Bridget de Wlalley, Kathy Clarke and the group of helpers for their hard work. We have received donations of £5,331, a very generous total which included £4,680 from the Dorset Wildlife Trust for work on Portland and £250 from the Minterne Estate.

There had been an increase in Unrestricted Expenditure of £2,267, mainly due to spending £3,400 at Alner's Gorse and Lankham Bottom which could not be reclaimed and the sum included the purchase of four ponies for grazing and associated maintenance costs. It had been decided to spend £1,000 on a much-needed upgrade of the Branch website.

Under Restricted Income a grant of £4,686 had been received for a Woodland Skills project. It has gone very well and £3,900 has been spent so far.

Allan concluded by saying that we were going into the next financial year with a reduced, but still very healthy, balance of £17,753. We had not had to borrow money from Head Office to tide us over the SFP shortfall. We should end the current year with around £11,000 and this will be needed for the 5-year plan of work at Alner's Gorse and Lankham Bottom.

Allan was asked about income from Gift Aid. He explained that membership income goes to HQ and we just get the proportion for Branch membership.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Adrian Neil and seconded by Lawrie de Whalley. The motion was passed unanimously. John Jenkins had agreed to continue as Scutineer and his appointment was proposed by Lyn Pullen and seconded by Robin George. All were in favour.

## 6. Election of Officers and Committee Members

	<b>Proposed by</b>		<b>Seconded by</b>
<b>Chairman:</b> Burningham	Jane Smith	Bobby Knowles	Colin
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Allan Higgin	Lyn Pullen	Bridget de Whalley

<b>Records Officer:</b>	Bill Shreeves.	John Boys	Richard Clarke
<b>Website Co-ordinator:</b>	Lyn Pullen	Richard Belding	Paulene Pires
<b>Committee Member:</b>	Bob Steedman	Lawrie de Whalley	Robin George

All were elected unanimously.

## **7 Any Other Business.**

**Recording.** Bill Shreeves thanked everyone who had helped with recording in the period since 2010. An excellent total of 1,980 1 km. squares have been covered, already exceeding the figure of 1,793 for the last Atlas period of 2005-09. There are a number of different types of recording including the Big Butterfly Count that itself brings in a large number of recorders. However, we could not afford to rest on our laurels as there are still 941 squares that have no records yet for the current Atlas period of 2010 -14. Bill urged people to help by going out to look for butterflies and sending in records. Maps and record forms were available at the back of the hall.

Bill expressed his gratitude to the photographers who fulfil an enormously important role. In this context the chairman mentioned the calendar that has been produced for 2014 and those who had supplied the photos for it, many of which had come from images on the website. The printers had given us 50 copies and there were a couple as prizes in today's raffle. In addition to the recorders, walkers, transect co-ordinators surveyors and photographers, Bill gave particular thanks to the verifiers and data inputters for all their work in checking and entering records on the computer database, especially Martin Raper, Robin George and Bernard Franklin.

**Brown Hairstreaks and Purple Emperors.** Roger Smith gave an update on the work that has been done to survey for these species. There is one colony of Brown Hairstreaks in the Blackmoor Vale, but two to three years ago an individual specimen was seen on the Dorset/Somerset border. He has searched further in this area and found a few adults last year and a number of eggs in the winter. It is possible that there is a new population in the Trent/Hummer area. Unfortunately hedge management in the area is poor.

A Purple Emperor was reported from Minterne Gardens. The head gardener said that he had seen them there for the past three years, but the breeding area has not yet been found. Roger invited people to contact him for further information.

The meeting closed at 3.10 p.m.