

THE DORSET BRANCH OF BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on Saturday 21st March 2015 At Puddletown Village Hall

1. Welcome by the Chairman and Apologies

The Chairman, Jane Smith, welcomed the approximately 55 members and friends present, saying that it was lovely to see everyone who had come on such a sunny afternoon and who had not been tempted to watch the rugby. She explained that, because of the timing of the financial year, it was actually the AGM for 2013/14. Apologies had been received from Kate Boys, Arthur Bryant, Allan Higgin, Tony Long and Alison Neil.

2. Minutes of Last AGM (23.03.14)

The minutes had been circulated at the meeting. There were no corrections and they were signed as an accurate record by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

The Newsletter. The straw poll at last year's AGM had indicated that a majority of members wished the newsletter to continue in paper form and did not want Branch funds to be spent on colour printing. However, Jane said that the matter will be kept under review as photos do look better and are more interesting in colour. Georgie Laing, the prospective Treasurer, reported that Head Office had found out that VAT has to be paid on all copies, including electronic ones.

4. Chairman's Report

Jane Smith thought that most people would agree that the past year had been a good one for butterflies and moths, similar in total sightings to 2013 but better than the preceding few years, although, by the nature of things, there are always winners and losers. Every month except last August had been warmer than average and, although it is unlikely to be a similar pattern this year, there will be implications for butterflies. The winter was relatively mild, but with a late spring there will probably not be so many records on the website yet, despite more people now submitting them than previously

The year has been an active one with the usual events, walks, moth trapping sessions, ID days and other functions. The Display Stall and its volunteers had also visited events organised by others and Jane wanted in particular to mention Bridget de Whalley for her contribution. During the winter the focus is on conservation work on our reserves and other good butterfly sites and Jane thanked Nigel Spring for organising a lot of this work. This year the pattern should be much the same and Jane hoped the weather would be good and that a lot of those present would come along to events.

Jane thanked Lyn Pullen for the sterling job she is doing in managing and developing the Website and she gets good help from Dom Greaves. The website gives a live presence for the Branch, it is improving all the time and Jane encouraged members to use it. It is a useful and easy way to submit butterfly records, all of which are verified by Martin Raper and Nick Urch to whom she expressed gratitude for ensuring that records are accurate.

Looking forward, Jane said there would be a number of changes on the committee. Four members were standing down: herself, Richard Belding, Allan Higgin and Bridget de Whalley. She was very pleased that Georgie Laing had consented to take on the Treasurer's role and, having worked in the finance department at B.C.'s Head Office, she should be more than able to maintain the high standard set by Allan. Georgie has kindly agreed to present the accounts today because Allan is unable to be present. Although he is not remaining on the committee, Richard will continue to keep a watching brief on conservation matters as Conservation Officer and will let the committee know of any developments of relevance to us.

Bridget has agreed to continue to run the Stall for this year, but she would like someone else to take it over after that, so Jane asked for anyone to let her know if they would be willing to help. Nigel Spring has agreed to stand as Branch Chair whilst continuing in his role of Reserves Manager and she was very pleased as she thinks that his strengths are things that she feels she could not do so well. He has a great knowledge of conservation matters and is always out and about, enthusing people and encouraging their efforts. Jane thanked him for agreeing to take on the role and thought that he will be brilliant at it.

Jane asked if there were any questions or comments, but there were none.

5. Treasurer's Report

A summary of the Branch Accounts was circulated at the meeting. In presenting them on Allan Higgin's behalf, Georgie Laing pointed out that they were for the year up to March 2014, in effect a year behindhand. They had been scrutinised by the auditors as part of the national accounting processes at Head Office and had been accepted by them.

There are problems with the late payment of HLS and SPS grants for work at Alner's Gorse and Lankham Bottom of some £6,500, but otherwise things are going along well with an excess of income over expenditure for the year of £2,642. The partial release of grant payments had in fact provided an increased income of £12,485 compared to the previous year. The final income for the year has not been received, but is promised.

The Sales Stall did very well, bringing in some £1,159. Thanks must go to Bridget de Whalley, Kathy Clarke and their band of helpers for all their hard work. Fundraising showed an increase of £1,752, due in part to Lyn Pullen's plant sales raising over £600. Donations were reduced by £4,483, partly because a one-off donation had been received from DWT in the previous year.

Unrestricted expenditure had gone up by £1,237, mainly due to increased spending on Education (£845), Newsletter production (£719) and work at Alner's Gorse and Lankham Bottom (£2,082). However, spending on general conservation was down by £1,831.

Total income was £25,129 and expenditure £22,487, leaving a bank balance of £20,336, an increase of £2,613 on the previous year. Although this was a healthy position, Nigel Spring commented that the uncertainty over agricultural policy grant payments made it harder for us to budget.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Adrian Neil and seconded by Rpbm George. The motion was passed unanimously. Georgie queried whether we need a scrutineer for the accounts now that they are audited at Head Office. She will check, but asked if there were any offers if we are told that we do need one. There were no volunteers so, if one is required, a request will go out on the website and elsewhere.

6. Election of Officers and Committee Members.

Before proceeding to the elections for the committee, Jane thanked the retiring members. **Bridget de Whalley** had come on to the committee in 2004 and Jane had been amazed at her dedication, energy and commitment. She has taken the Display and Sales Stalls to countless events over the past 11 years and the Branch is indebted to her for her efforts that have introduced thousands of people, both children and adults, to the joys of butterfly and moth watching. Bridget was given a book token in appreciation of the fantastic amount of work she had done. She accepted it on behalf of her team of volunteers and said how grateful she was, particularly to **Kathie and Richard Clarke**.

Jane said that she would also give a similar gift to **Allan Higgin** to thank him for all his work as Treasurer. He had been on the committee for a period before taking on the role in 2007 and his first task had been to computerise the accounts. Since then he has kept the Branch's finances on an even keel, always ensuring that expenditure did not exceed income and that our financial reserves were sufficient to meet our conservation obligations, but were not excessive. She expressed the Branch's gratitude to Allan for managing its finances so competently.

Richard Belding joined the committee in 2004 and Jane said she has sat in many meetings with him where she had been impressed by his knowledge and awareness of what was happening in the county. His background in the field of conservation meant that his advice and support were invaluable, particularly in helping to secure funding for two of our butterfly reserves. He had decided not to continue on the committee, but is willing to carry on as Conservation Officer.

Election of Officers

		Proposed by	Seconded by
Chairman:	Nigel Spring	Robin George	Bernard
Franklin			
Treasurer	Georgie Laing	Lawrie de Whalley	Richard Belding
Membership Secretary	Robin George	Bob Steadman	Bridget de
Whalley			

All were in favour. Jane thanked Nigel for taking on the role of Chairman. She said that she had enjoyed her period of office and would miss it, but would be relieved not to have the responsibility any more. Jane expressed her gratitude to Robin for her willingness to continue as a Branch officer. She added that Robin undertook a great deal of organisational work for the Branch as well as looking after membership. She is the first point of contact for queries coming in and does a huge amount of work on the data bases.

Election of Committee Member

	Proposed by	Seconded by
Richard Norman	Brian Dicker	Robin George

All were in favour. Richard was asked to say something about why he had agreed to come on to the committee. He explained that he had had a long-term interest in wildlife as his late father had been an outstanding entomologist and had passed on some of his knowledge. He had been a member of the Dorset Wildlife Trust and chaired their reserves committee for a long time. Richard himself is a life member of DWT, serves with CPRE and co-ordinates the Piddles Wood transect. He has had a long experience of being on committees and hoped that he could add value to this one and looked forward to serving on it.

7 Any Other Business.

Work Parties. Lawrie de Whalley pointed out that Arthur Bryant had organised more than 40 work parties in the past year and the butterfly counts on the sites that he manages have gone up. Lawrie wanted to thank him for his wonderful contribution. Jane Smith added that Arthur has single-handedly filled in a great many 'white holes' and although he has stood down from the committee, he usually attends meetings.

Records Officer. John Boys thought that there should be some mention of Bill Shreeves for all the work he does. Jane said that the four regional reorders' meetings are an annual tour de force that require a steady flow of work throughout the year and a huge amount of preparation. Bill keeps his presentations fresh right through to the last one. In reply, Bill thanked everyone who has sent in records for the past five years. A vast amount of data has been gathered that will be made available to DERC, other government bodies and for the UK Atlas. He gave especial thanks to Martin Raper, Robin George and Bernard Franklin for keeping him sane with the tasks of verification and data entry. Martin in particular has got to grips with the new electronic methods of data entry.

Dorset Atlases. Bill continued by saying that the committee aims to produce an Atlas for 2010 - 2014, the last one that was published having covered the years 2000 - 2004. It will be put on the website (where copies of previous atlases can be seen), but if members would like a hard copy they could put their names down to receive one. Now we will have to start again for the period 2015 - 2019. There are a number of recording schemes that people can participate in, they can help to fill in 'white holes' or they can just submit casual records. If anyone who has not done recording before, they can put their names on a list to attend the ID workshop that is planned for the spring. There were a number of white holes that were not covered in the previous cycle and Bill would like these to be tackled as a priority for the coming one. There were still several 10 km. squares in the county without any garden records and it would be useful to have some in these areas. Copies of the booklet on identifying and counting butterflies are available, as were forms for the various recording methods.

Butterfly Records. Bill mentioned that there were some spare coloured forms with the transect results at the back of the hall if anyone who had not been able to get to the regional meetings would like one. He had just noticed that records of the first Orange Tip and Speckled Wood had been sent to the website and he made a plea for people to go out and look for butterflies. Lyn Pullen wished to add a vote of thanks to Martin Raper and Nick Urch who between them had verified 16,000 records for the website. Adrian Neil asked for volunteers to help with the Wider Countryside Survey and Lyn said she would put a note about this on the website.

Concluding Remarks. Jane thanked her fellow committee members for making her task as Chairman so pleasurable. Nigel thanked Jane for all her work for the Branch, she had been secretary as well as chairman. Nigel presented her with a gift on behalf of the Branch and thanked her for being a quiet and steadying influence that had enabled it to make great progress during her period of office.

The meeting closed at 2.47 p.m.