

# **DORSET BRANCH OF BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION**

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at Puddletown Village Hall**

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

Nigel Spring, Chairman, thanked everyone for coming and said that it was good to see so many people at the meeting. There were some 74 members and friends present, about the same number as last year. He gave a particular welcome to visitors Andy & Linda Barker from Hampshire and Frank Crosier from Wiltshire. We were fortunate to have two speakers from Butterfly Conservation, Rachel Jones and Sarah Meredith to bring us up to date on projects for Large Blue and Duke of Burgundy butterflies. Apologies were received from Brian & Sylvia Dicker, Bobby & Edward Knowles, Robin George, Giles & Barbara Droop, Lawrie & Bridget De Whalley, Roger Smith, Bridget Young, Andrew Cooper and Suzanne Mattock.

### **2. Minutes of Last AGM (13.02.16)**

The minutes had been circulated at the meeting. Georgie Laing pointed out that the figure in the second line of her report should be the year 2015 and not 1015. With this amendment, a motion that the minutes be accepted as a correct record was proposed by Richard Callaghan and seconded by Myra Sealy. All were in favour.

### **3. Matters Arising**

None.

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

Nigel said that he had not been able to decide whether 2016 had been an *Annus Mirabilis* or an *Annus Horribilis*. Quite a lot of things had happened that will have a huge impact on us - Brexit, the US Presidential Election, continuing concern about climate change - who knows what the outcomes will be? However, one positive achievement for the us was that we have at last produced a Branch Newsletter with colour images after having considered doing so for a long time. There were some doubtful voices, but we found a printer who cost was only a little more that we would have paid for black & white and the price for the latter would have gone up anyway. There seems to be general agreement that it looks much better and a lot of compliments have been received, these should really go to Lyn Pullen for all the work she put into the new format. Thanks should also go to Guy Freeman for his work in the past and to Jane Smith for taking on the job of editor. It would be good to have more pieces for the Newsletter and Nigel encouraged people to get in touch with Jane - the more contributions the better!

Another good thing has been the work done on Dorset's four reserves which are now looking better than ever. In particular the ponies have done a great job on Alner's Gorse and Rooksmoor. However, the Jurassica project still appears to present a threat to Broadcroft. The reserves get a lot of visitors, but unfortunately not many make donations to help with upkeep despite leaflets being placed at Alner's Gorse. Hazel Wilmott suggested installing collection boxes and said that the National Trust receives large amounts of money from those at Golden Cap. Nigel thought that the money might be taken, but we may be able to have a smartphone app. to enable people to donate.

The work done on the website by Lyn Pullen and Dom Greaves keeps it very up to date and allows people to find out what is going on more than ever before. A great deal of traffic now passes through it.

How good was last year's butterfly season? Bill Shreeves will talk to us later about the results from the transects, around 64 are now covered which must be close to the greatest number we have ever done and is a fantastic achievement. However, it probably won't take him long to tell us which butterflies did well. Red Admirals and Large and Small Whites appear to have had a reasonably good year. Brimstones seemed to flourish in both broods and they have been seen flying during the winter, but they may suffer as a result of the unusual weather. A number of species crashed including Small Copper, Speckled Wood and Wall. Although the second brood of Small Coppers in fact did quite well, they emerged as adults too late to produce larvae that are likely to overwinter successfully. The late Peacock larvae were also almost certain to fail to complete their life cycle.

At the end of last year we had to say goodbye to Martin Warren. Members of the committee sent their own contributions to his leaving present and a card, but we might also send him a card from the branch as a whole. Martin has now taken on the role of part-time development officer for BC Europe, but he will still be doing things in Dorset so we hope that he will continue to be involved with us. Another major farewell we had to make was to Lawrie and Bridget De Whalley when they moved back to Surrey as a result of Lawrie's health problems. Nigel had thanked Bridget last year for her work with the Sales and Display Stall which she had built up to visiting 28 events. Lawrie had spent a huge amount of time on surveys and conservation work, amongst other things making it a personal crusade to destroy the Japanese Knotweed at Broadcroft. Nigel wished to record formal thanks to both of them for all the work they did for us in Dorset.

We have not yet been able to find a replacement for Bridget and Lyn Pullen added that what is needed is a co-ordinator/organiser who would not necessarily have to go out to events as there were still a group of people willing to do that. One advantage of helping is that admission to the events is free! Nigel went on to say that we also need to find someone to take over as Dorset Moths Officer because Les Hill no longer lives in the county. He explained that it was a huge job because of the number of records and a backlog will soon build up. The point has been made that it may be a job on a national scale and one possibility is that it could be done by a group of experts, each of whom would specialise in a particular group of moths (as is done with bird recording).

Looking forward to this year's season, Nigel said that we have a lot of events coming up and he encouraged everyone to join in. In these rather challenging times it is important for us to work together with other groups who share similar aims. A number of our members must belong to other organisations so we should collaborate and combine our efforts where possible. Nigel ended by thanking those present for attending the meeting.

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

Georgie Laing presented the Branch accounts for the year to the end of March 2016. HQ had completed a successful audit. The accounts have been examined by Allan Higgin and signed off. Allan was thanked for his work. A summary version of them was included in the Autumn 2016 Branch Newsletter that was circulated to members.

The majority of expenditure is on direct conservation work, nearly £10,500 or about 61% of

total expenditure. This involves contract work on the Branch's four reserves, training for volunteers, purchase of tools and management of the ponies. The costs of the Newsletter and servicing the membership amount to 81% of subscription income. Each issue of the Newsletter costs around £576 for printing and £350 for postage meaning that the cost of three issues a year is nearly £2,780, three-quarters of all membership costs. It would save money if members were willing to receive an electronic version of the Newsletter and there was a form at the back of the hall to sign up for this. When they join, all new members are now automatically sent the electronic version unless they ask for the printed one.

In relation to income, at the end of the previous financial year we were not sure whether we would get one Basic Payment Scheme payment. In the end we did, but not until June after the books were closed. All such payments go to HQ and are late, often after the end of the financial year. Higher Level Stewardship payments for Lankham Bottom and Alner's Gorse come to an end next year and Nigel pointed out that if we do not get any further grants it will make a huge difference to how we manage the reserves. John Davis at HQ is looking for other sources of funding. There was some income from the ponies, for the first time they had been hired out for grazing. This year we should get around £600 for this.

Financial reserves amount to £15,778. Butterfly Conservation's policy is that we should not retain assets representing more than five months operational costs. The committee is therefore aiming to budget for a deficit this year in order to spend some of this amount. As at the date of today's AGM we have £18,829 cash in the bank so overall we are in a healthy position and have money to spend on further contracts.

Frank Crozier asked if the report on the accounts could be sent out with at Newsletter to save money. Nigel replied that one Newsletter each year does contain such a report. Lyn mentioned that we had found last time that two separate mailings were actually cheaper than a combined one.

A proposal to adopt the accounts was put by Bob Steedman and seconded by Richard Belding. All were in favour. Georgie explained that after April 2017 all the accounts will be handled by HQ so we will not need an examiner after that. However, we will still need an examiner for this financial year and Allan Higgin was willing to carry out the task. His nomination was proposed by Jane Smith and seconded by Richard Norman. All were in favour..

## **6. Election of Officers**

**Records Officer:** Bill Shreeves, proposed by John Boys, seconded by Pauline Pires.

**Website Manager:** Lyn Pullen, proposed by Brian Arnold, seconded by Lynda Lambert.

The motion to appoint these officers was carried with acclaim.

Nigel made a request for new members to serve on the committee and anyone interested in doing so should speak to him.

## **7 Any Other Business.**

**Communication by Email and Social Media.** Myra Sealy commented that there was a good attendance at the meeting, but might more people have come if there had been an email reminder? Nigel said that he had sent one to people on his circulation list, but it does not cover

everyone. Lyn added that that information had been on the website, Facebook and Twitter. The Branch does have a number of email addresses, but members have to opt in to providing them to HQ so that they can be passed on. We could ask HQ to see whether they could circulate such a message in future.

Lyn Pullen said she would like to record our thanks to Dom Greaves, the technical expert who does a wonderful job with the website and also to Andrew Cooper who has taken on the job of working with the social media. On that subject, Sean Cooch suggested that it would be a good idea to have an introductory session at the AGM to promote the use of Facebook and Twitter. A huge amount of information is available, but people do not understand how to use them. Lyn said that she would have liked to do something like that at today's meeting to explain about the website, but unfortunately the hall does not have an internet connection.

**The Records Officer's Report.** Bill Shreeves said that he would like to endorse what Nigel had said about Bridget and Lawrie DeWhalley. The amount they had done for recording and surveying in Dorset was huge and it will be difficult to find enough people to make up for the loss caused by their departure.

We are now in the third year of the 2015 - 2019 Atlas period. We depend a great deal on existing recorders, but hope very much that new ones will join us. In this context there are a number of very important things that we need to take on board this year:

**The Weymouth Relief Road.** We are supposed to be monitoring the development of the verges and cuttings along the road and they are proving to provide a good habitat for butterflies, but last year the only person to visit seems to have been John Elliott. Bill had placed information, maps and forms at the back of the hall and appealed for people to sign up to help with recording. Lyn Pullen suggested that it would be a good idea to co-ordinate visits, but Bill said that it did not really matter if the times when people did visit were fairly close together.

**Hambleton Hill.** The National Trust is asking us to help with walks there to record butterflies. There had been a transect there at one time, but it was discontinued. At **Hod Hill** there is also a need for more recording as the National Trust considers that the north and east ramparts, which are not on the transect, are being neglected. Maps and record sheets are available.

**Existing Transect Walks.** There is a need for more walkers for the transects, in some cases a transect is in danger of being discontinued if more volunteers cannot be found.

For all of these surveys and walks, lists had been put out for people to sign up to offer help.

Bill outlined ways that new members (or existing members who have not done much recording) could get more involved in finding out about and helping to record Dorset's butterflies:

- A free booklet, 'Counting Dorset's Butterflies and Moths' explains the various recording methods and surveys.
- An Identification Workshop will be held on 27<sup>th</sup> May at Cerne Abbas. In the morning there will be an indoor session followed by a field trip in the afternoon (weather permitting). Those wishing to participate have to register and are encouraged to sign up quickly.
- Field meetings take place in various parts of the county and details are given in the Events List sent to all members.

- Four regional recorders' meetings are held in February and March each year at which reports are given on what happened for butterflies in Dorset in the previous year. Of the 65 transect walks undertaken in 2016, only three recorded more butterflies than in 2015. Only three species did really well and 18 did badly. Coloured sheets detailing the results on all the transects will be available at the meetings, but Bill had copies that he could give to anyone who will be unable to attend them. He had also written a report for 2016 that was available in the hall.

Bill thanked Martin Raper, Nick Urch, Bernard Franklin, Robin George, Lyn Pullen and Dom Greaves and everyone else involved in collecting, verifying and analysing the records. He concluded by saying that the new butterfly season was coming soon and he urged everyone, as citizen scientists, to get out and get recording.

The meeting closed at 3.05 p.m.

A.N.  
05.01 2018