



## Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch

### Minutes of AGM held at Christchurch Abbeydale, Heron Way, Abbeydale, Gloucester, GL4 5EQ, at 2 pm on Saturday 29th October 2016

Branch Chairman, Sue Smith, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Approximately 52 members were present.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Rose & Rob Mabbett, Paul Arnold, Ros John, Simon Barker, Ian Grange, Mike & Daphne Brown, Jill Oberlin-Harris, Helen Carver, Andrew Bishop, Alan Smith, Sue & Geoff Brett
2. **Minutes of the last AGM**  
The minutes from the 2015 AGM were adopted with unanimous agreement.
3. **Matters arising from the 2015 AGM minutes**  
None.
4. **Reports from Branch Officers**
  - 4.1 **Chairman's Report – Sue Smith (SS)**

Butterflies and moths did not fare well in 2016. External forces are likely to have an impact in the coming years, particularly with regard to financial support. The State of Nature Report demonstrates many species are suffering. There is a need to highlight both aspects to help promote butterflies and moths. The weather (again!) has had a big effect on butterfly and moth numbers; it is thought that the warmer winters are detrimental to their survival.

Gloucestershire Branch committee members have been very busy all year with meetings with regard to species, sites, habitat, field visits and work parties. The creation of the new Walks Booklet has also been very time consuming.

Work parties have now started for the winter of 2016/7 and a new arrangement has been made with Ecotricity for some of their staff to join two events at Rough Bank.

SS thanked all committee members for their continued support, particularly to Polly, Trish, Simon, Vic and Chris Wiltshire. Changes to the committee have evolved over the year and we are sad to lose Polly, Paul Attaway, Dave Labdon and Paul Matthews. We welcome Serena Meredith as Finance Officer and Chris Tracey as Newsletter Editor. There are currently still two vacancies on the committee. Paul Matthews is continuing to look after Facebook and Twitter.

Martin Warren, CEO for 13 years will be leaving BC at the end of this year. He will be replaced by Julie Williams for one year as Acting CEO. Her term will be reviewed at the end of June 2017.

There are potentially two big HLF projects currently in the development phase – Foresters' Forest and Back from the Brink. We will receive further news regarding these in the spring of 2017.

Membership continues to rise – 755 actual members, of which there will be more in Trish Atkinson's report.

I am grateful to the wider community of butterfly and moth supporters in the county – the records are a great help in assessing the health of our countryside.

Thank you to everyone who has come this afternoon and continues to support Butterfly Conservation.

#### **4.2 Treasurer's Report – Serena Meredith (SM)**

SM explained that since she has been Finance Officer from July and did not control branch fund expenditure for the year under review. All the paperwork was sent to HO for the preparation of these accounts so all figures, headings and descriptions are theirs and have been audited as part of the Society's main accounts. The account's format is required to comply with charitable reporting, to show spending on charitable objectives against administration costs.

Income: Increased subscriptions are due to additional members. Grant income from agri-environment schemes is only reduced due to late payments being received in the previous year. The difference in donations reflects the unpredictable nature of these receipts, but fundraising efforts were not as productive as 2014/15. The sales income of £207 includes ID charts as well as walks booklets. The staging of events, whilst raising the profile of BC and possibly increasing membership, did not break even.

Expenditure: £2000 was contributed to Head Office projects. "Field Equipment" covers grazing costs of £3400, fencing £550 and equipment purchases, repairs and fuel of £211. "Consultants-Conservation" includes cattle management £550, JCB hire £750, water supply £284 and scrub clearance and grazing £3750. Most of this was spent on the Prestbury Hill reserves in order to comply with the habitat management needed to meet the grant funding requirements. Postage costs are probably reduced due to delayed invoicing and will be reflected in the current year figures. Chainsaw training and first aid courses were undertaken by work party volunteers in order to comply with H&S and insurance requirements.

All in all, there was an excess of expenditure over income of £4844. This reflects the increased habitat management work undertaken during the year, and is what the majority of our funds should be used for. We still though have a healthy bank balance which should enable us to continue to enhance the habitat in the eyes of the butterflies and moths that call our reserves home.

Moving on to the current financial year, the main expenses to date have been on newsletter and leaflet production and associated postage, purchase of ID guides, insurance, water supply and power tool courses. Work on habitat management and grazing at Prestbury Hill is being put out to tender by HO, but to date, no contracts have been made as far as I am aware. Planned expenditure on this is expected to be in the region of £5000. An updated and revised walks booklet has been published and new reserve leaflets are in preparation. Income from subscriptions has again increased (to £3084) and one of the expected 2 grant payments (of £3600) has been received. As at 30 September, the bank balance was £20638.

##### **Acceptance of Accounts:**

The accounts have already been audited by BC and were adopted by unanimous consensus.

#### **4.3 Membership Report - Tricia Atkinson (TA)**

Membership has continued to rise at a slow steady rate. There are now 550 household members, but with joint and family membership, we have about 750 individual members in the branch. This is about twice the number of members in the branch than when TA took over as membership secretary about 8 or 9 years ago.

In the spring, Paul Matthews, one of our committee members, offered to take on the role of membership secretary. TA was very grateful for that as she found it difficult to fit in membership secretary duties as well as coordinating butterfly recording and other activities for the branch. However a few months after Paul took on the role, he became very ill and had to give up his involvement in the branch. At the time, TA wasn't in the position to take it back on so Sue asked Head Office to carry out the duties. This they have done for which we are very grateful. However we feel that we now ought to take on these duties again. Head Office have been keeping our membership records up-to-date but we would like to resume sending out the welcome letters to new members. Volunteers please contact TA or Sue.

Meanwhile, I would like to welcome all new members to the branch and also thank existing members for your continued support.

#### **4.4 Butterfly Recorder's Report – Chris Wiltshire (CW)**

CW reported that it had been a poor season. It was a mild winter with daffodils flowering before Christmas. The mild weather continued until February and 7 butterfly species were on the wing by the 7<sup>th</sup> January. Milder winter weather was followed by a hard frost in February. Cool weather then persisted until May, which CW feels was a significant cause of the generally low butterfly numbers over the summer. The Rough Bank transect had the lowest count since 2012.

Dingy Skippers – had higher numbers than average.

Brimstones – had good numbers on some transects.

Whites – Green Veined Whites did the best of the Whites, the numbers of other species were down.

Green Hairstreak – had reasonable numbers especially on Stinchcombe Hill following scrub clearance.  
Small Blue – had a good year with over 1000 on Selsey Common.  
Large Blue – had an excellent year at Daneway Banks.  
Red Admirals – poor numbers early in the season, improving somewhat later in the year.  
Painted Ladies – had an above average year.  
Marsh Fritillaries – numbers remained reasonably high at Strawberry Banks.  
Silver Washed Fritillaries – numbers were low, especially at Lower Woods  
Browns – the numbers were generally low though Speckled Wood numbers were ok.  
Meadow Brown and Ringlet bucked the trend on Stinchcombe Hill where they did well.

Wood White was seen on Edge Common again and a Purple Emperor near Gloucester, however it is suspected that these may be releases.

TA noted that Dark Green Fritillary numbers had been low and there were few Small Coppers.

Chris Tracey noted that there were 60 Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at Oakley Wood but not many at Hailey Wood.

CW requested that members submit their records to [butterfly-recorder@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:butterfly-recorder@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk)

#### **4.5 Moth Officer's Report – Peter Hugo (PH)**

Moth numbers are well down this year, as are butterfly numbers and it seems we need a severe winter to remedy that. Despite low numbers, many more species continue to be recorded. New moth species are constantly arriving from the south and spreading northwards as our climate warms up. Quite a few migrant moths have been recorded in the county this year. Possibly the most striking example was a *Convolvulus Hawk* caught by Dave Sims in his Sharpness trap. PH suspects many sightings are not being reported. For example, formal records of Hummingbird Hawks tend to be lower than the verbal reports of sightings. So the message is please record everything you see, it's the only way we will know what is going on with our moths and butterflies.

Although PH has not run any formal public moth events this past year, there is still a lot of moth activity taking place. A number of people are running traps at various localities on a regular basis. Guy Meredith, of course, is constantly on the move, turning up at various points in the county. The moth recording success at Rough Bank continues. PH has been unable to run any traps there this year but Guy has continued doing so and at the last count there were 613 moth species recorded on the reserve since 2012.

For a slightly more expanded account of what has happened regarding moths please read the moth report in the latest "Antennae" but the main message is that many more people are getting into moth recording. Our Gloucestershire Moths Facebook Group continues to grow and this really is the modern way to know what is going on in the moth world and who is doing what. Events are organised instantly via this group at very short notice. As a result of the Facebook Group, moth recording in Gloucestershire really does have a very bright future. If you are interested in joining this group please contact PH, [moth-officer@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:moth-officer@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk).

#### **4.6 Bill Smyllie/The Masts Reserve Report – John Coates (JC)**

The last 2 year's work on clearing the scrub below the Cotswold Way has paid off with Duke of Burgundies seen there this spring. This work was helped by the Cotswold Wardens and BC Volunteers and has resulted in a lovely grassland area.

The Masts and Bill Smyllie had some wonderful flora this year and the Musk and Bee Orchids did well, as did Kidney and Horseshoe Vetches. In terms of butterflies the Dukes, Chalkhill Blues and Small Blues did well but the Dark Green Fritillary numbers were down. There were no Wall Browns or Graylings.

Due to issues with motorbikes, Gloucestershire County Council will supply metal gates.

In line with the HLS agreement, contractors will continue to be used to clear scrub, improve fencing and seed Heather on the Masts reserve. In addition, there will be 35-40 belted Galloways on both reserves for 60 days.

This winter's work parties will start on the Bill Smyllie Reserve and aim to create paths from the top down to Happy Valley. A tapestry of high and low shrubs is being developed but more corridors are needed. In February there will be hedge laying and scrub clearance – with a bonfire of course! Volunteers are always needed to help with Work Parties. Please see Antennae or the Web Site for dates.

#### **4.7 Rough Bank Report – Sue Smith**

The wall has now been completed along the access strip and we are awaiting installation of a pedestrian gate into the top of the main reserve. Butterfly numbers have been down on the Bank, in line with everywhere else this year. The total number of moth species recorded has now risen to 613.

The bunds put in by Stroud District Council have been doing their job, although the higher one in Little Myers seems to be retaining water for most of the time. Other creatures and plants seem to be moving in to make the most of it. The Belted Galloway cattle came to Great and Little Myers during the summer to try and keep some of the grass down. They are now on Rough Bank itself.

Several trees were inspected and some work is anticipated on these during the winter. Unfortunately there is ash die-back on the reserve so we will need to keep a watching brief on these trees.

We have joined with Ecotricity to have joint work parties – the first one was in October – the second is planned for November. We hope this may be an on-going arrangement. It was instigated by one of our members who now works at Ecotricity – Matt Hollands (a moth enthusiast). Students from the Royal Agricultural University will also probably come to the reserve during the first quarter of 2017.

There have been two committee meetings to review the reserve – this seems to be the usual pattern.

The boundary between Lord Harrington and ourselves is being investigated as it is unclear on the maps (it wasn't necessary when all the land was in one holding).

Events for the winter are listed in Antennae and on the website.

#### **4.8 Forest Conservation Officer's Report – Simon Glover (SG)**

It is estimated that c£16M has been spent on the Northern Quarter by the Council. Legal challenges have been exhausted and part one of the spine road is built so contractors can access the building site. The complicated footings planned for the college are keeping the pressure on with regular input regarding potential ground contamination.

The number of amphibians and reptiles caught and moved is well over 20,000. For the invertebrates to be able to support such massive numbers is quite remarkable.

One possible hope is that finance for the College build may be held up as currently finance is frozen pending Phillip Hammond's autumn statement. Maybe Brexit will have a silver lining.

Foresters Forest – we have been working closely with Kate Wollen in the FC and Sam Ellis from HQ to have a major element of this HLF funded programme for butterflies. The Forestry Commission are the lead partner with GWT focussing on the wildlife and conservation elements. There are many other partners. The butterfly's project has £60K in the application and hopefully we will be able to part fund professional help for 1 day a week. We had an emergency application for additional funds when the results of the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries recording this year were known.

As detailed in Antennae, the meta-population around Moseley Green collapsed with a maximum of 2 seen. The only other site where they flew was Linear Park with its attendant issues with development and people pressure. Linear Park has been stable for 3-4 years and is now the main site.

A comprehensive habitat survey in June at Gorsty Knoll confirmed what we already knew. The habitat is too small and fragmented which is why we lost the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries 3-4 years ago. It will take the same time to get them back.

Sustainable sheep grazing is needed in the forest to improve the habitat.

#### **5 Butterfly Monitoring in Gloucestershire – Tricia Atkinson**

Branch members have continued to be involved in butterfly monitoring again this summer. We have continued recording on all our standard transects on managed sites. For some transects, just one person records every week, whereas for other transects a team of 2, 3, 4 and even 5 share the recording on a rota basis.

At the Cheltenham and Stroud areas winter indoor meetings, I recruited new recorders for the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey. We now have 26 recorders allocated to 37 1km squares. This recording project has been set up to record butterflies out in the wider countryside including woods and built-up area. Standard transects are used to record butterflies on good sites and while still very important, they don't give a picture of what is happening throughout the countryside.

Standard transects require a recorder to record every week from April to September whereas for WCBS, only 2 visits are required, once in July and once in August so it is reduced effort. Thank you if you have been involved recording on a standard transect or on a Wider Countryside square. This year has been depressing as numbers of butterflies are well down as Chris has said, but that is even more reason to carry out the recording as we need to know just how much butterflies have been affected this year. I have heard recorders say 'It is a waste of time as I didn't see many butterflies', but please do continue as the data from this monitoring is just so important. Recording no butterflies is just as important (although not as interesting) as recording lots. Can I just add that if you haven't yet submitted your records, the absolute deadline is 31st October, which is in 2 day's time!

Key site recording has continued again this summer. Not many records have been sent to me yet so I don't know yet just how many sites have been recorded. We held meetings for recorders in the spring and recruited a few more recorders for key sites, but we still don't have enough recorders to record on every key site we have. Key site recording in the Cotswolds is particularly patchy except for in the Stroud area.

Last but not least is general casual butterfly recording. This can be carried out anywhere in Gloucestershire but we are particularly interested in white squares. These are 1km squares for which we have no recent butterfly records. This is probably because no recording has been carried out rather than there are no butterflies there.

Please send key site records to your area coordinator which is the person who asked you to do the recording (Sue, Vic or myself). Please send casual records from white squares or anywhere else in the county to Chris, branch butterfly recorder. Email addresses are given in Antennae and on the website.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who has done any type of butterfly recording. It all helps to build up a picture of the state of butterflies in our county.

## **6. Election of Officers**

### **6.1 Re-elections**

The following committee members were due to stand down from the committee (after three years) but are willing to stand for re-election:

Chris Wiltshire

Andrew Daw

Sue Smith

Serena Meredith proposed their renewal and it was seconded by Simon Glover.

### **6.2 Treasurer**

Serena Meredith was co-opted onto the committee during the summer as Finance Officer. Her position needs to be confirmed at this AGM.

She was proposed by Mo Gardner and seconded by Trish Atkinson.

### **6.3 Antennae**

Chris Tracey has offered to produce Antennae so is re-joining the committee. She was proposed by Trish Atkinson and seconded by Vic Polley.

### **6.4 Standing Down**

Sue expressed her thanks for their contribution to Dave Labdon, Pauline Lillico, Paul Matthews and Paul Attaway who have stood down from the committee this year.

Sue expressed thanks to all committee members for their help this year and reminded everyone that new volunteers are always welcome. She also thanked everyone in the branch for their individual contributions.

## **7. Any Other Business**

### **7.1** Trish expressed everyone's thanks for all the hard work that Sue puts into the branch and for agreeing to continue for another year, which was seconded by Peter Hugo.

7.2 Everyone was reminded that the new Walks Booklet is available.

**8. Date of next AGM**

Confirmed as Saturday 28th October 2017 – details to be published in the Spring 2017 edition of Antennae and on the branch website/Twitter/Facebook.

**The AGM closed at 15:30**

Dave Simcox and Sarah Meredith judged the wonderful photos for this year's photographic competition.

Congratulations to:

UK Butterflies:	1 <sup>st</sup> and overall winner – Brimstone by Ray Collins.
UK Moths:	1 <sup>st</sup> – Early Grey by Ken Cservenka
Overseas Butterflies and Moths:	1 <sup>st</sup> – 2 Tailed Pasha by Andrew Daw
Habitats:	1 <sup>st</sup> – Coombe Hill, Wotton under Edge by Dave Sims

Finally, thanks go to Dave Simcox, of Habitat Designs Ltd, and Sarah Meredith from Butterfly Conservation for their interesting and informative talks about the Duke of Burgundy, Painswick Valley Project and the Large Blue in the Cotswolds. Everyone was very interested to learn about the dedicated research that goes into this work and the outcomes arising from it.