



Marylebone Birdwatching Society

MINUTES

of the 35th Annual General meeting held on Friday 20th January 2017 at the Gospel Oak Methodist Church, Lisburne Road, London NW3 2NT.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed members of whom some 20 were in attendance. Apologies were received from Nick Moore, Meg Game and Andrew Peel.

2. Minutes of the Previous AGM

Minutes of the AGM held on 15th January 2016 were read and confirmed as a true record. (Additionally, it was noted that a correction had been made to the previous year's minutes with the addition, under election of committee, of Publicity Marion Hill.)

3. Matters arising from the Minutes.

The Chairman confirmed that a donation of £150 had been made to the British Trust for Ornithology in memory of John Benson, Malcolm Wroe and Alix Mullineaux.

Comments were invited from members regarding the new coach trip pick-up arrangements. An increase in numbers participating in coach outings was noted and generally response to the new arrangements was favourable.

There is currently no specific person responsible for organising trips away. Jean Clarke has organised a trip to Dorset in 2017 and encouragement was given for any individual who might like to arrange future trips away.

4. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman reported that 2015-2016 had been another successful year for the Society. He commented that the Society had great qualities and notably the friendliness and co-operative spirit with which all members participated.

Rather than listing all the events throughout the year he referred members to the excellent illustrated summary of the 2015/2016 season available on the website.

The new coach trip arrangements have worked well and resulted in getting out of London quicker and hence arriving at destinations earlier giving more time at the reserves. Thanks were given to Andrew Peel for all his work regarding the coach trips and leading walks at the reserves.

Steff Turton had been co-opted on to the committee as membership secretary replacing Helen McCulloch. Steff and Marion Hill had radically updated the membership procedure with an electronic process and set up and introduced PayPal as a method of payment for the society. Payment by cash or cheque remains an alternative however. It was noted that membership numbers continue to increase from 125 last year to 139 just prior to the meeting.

Coach bookings can also be booked and paid for electronically using PayPal and again appears to be working well.

Gaye Henson was thanked for organising the indoor meetings and Jean Clarke for providing the catering for these meetings.

Joyce Huggins was thanked for organising the local outings and Meg Game for leading Tuesday morning walks on Hampstead Heath, which often have 20 or more taking part.

Marion Hill was also thanked for her tremendous work for the Society on publicity, social media and additional help with membership and coach bookings.

The Chairman finished his report with a quote from American naturalist and writer Henry David Thoreau "It is not what we look at but what we see" and hoped that as a group we can all look at things with a more informed eye and see more of the natural world about us.

He finished by extending good wishes to all our members for the 2016/2017 season ahead.

Full text of report as prepared by Chairman follows the minutes.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer presented the draft accounts for 2015/2016. A small surplus of income over expenditure of £161 was reported and overall the Society has assets of £5,872.

Apologies were given that the hire of the hall for the Dreda Farrell Memorial lecture ought properly to be charged to the Dreda Farrell fund rather than the general fund and this will be adjusted forthwith.

The accounts had not yet been examined by the Auditor (and indeed neither had last year's accounts been audited). The Treasurer will contact the Auditor to see if he is still willing to do so and if not an alternative auditor sought.

The financial statement was approved by members, subject to auditing, having been proposed by Barbara Luke and seconded by Helen McCulloch.

5. Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (HHCC) Representative Report

Gaye Henson, as the Society representative on the HHCC reported that the Society had input to all but one meeting of the HHCC over the last year.

Meetings are always preceded by a walk across the Heath with the Superintendent, officers and committee chairman two days earlier to visit sites due to be discussed at committee meetings.

Topics are wide-ranging from the progress of the Ponds Project, education on the Heath, sporting events, cafe licences, constabulary issues, wider City of London policies such as Open Spaces Bill and business and management plans.

Your representative has the opportunity to ensure that the promotion and protection of wildlife, nature and in particular bird life is taken into consideration on relevant items considered by the committee.

The Ponds Project finished on time and it has been pleasing to note the amount of new planting and increase in wild-life friendly habitats created as a result of the project.

Of particular interest to the Society will be the opportunity to input into discussions around the causeway and access to the island on the boating pond likely to be discussed at the March 2017 HHCC meeting.

She thanked the Society for allowing her to be the MBS representative on this most interesting committee.

6. Election of Committee

On a motion proposed by Helen McCulloch, seconded by Val Dunn, Steff Turton was elected Membership Secretary in succession to Helen McCulloch.

The remainder of the Committee were re-elected en bloc on a motion proposed by Barbara Luke and seconded by Theresa Roman from the floor, as follows -

Steve Ripley	Chairman
Nick Moore	Secretary
Meg Game	Heath Walks Leader
Judy Powell	Treasurer
Marion Hill	Publicity/Coach Bookings Secretary
Gaye Henson	Indoor Meetings Organiser/Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee representative
Jean Clarke	Catering
Joyce Huggins	Local Outings Co-ordinator
Andrew Peel	Coach Outings Leader

7. Election of Auditor

Provided Richard Campbell is prepared to act as Auditor the members voted to re-elect him on a motion proposed by Dawn Painter, seconded by Michael Nolan.

8. Any Other Business

The Chairman notified the meeting of a proposed change to the rules of the Society. Existing Rule 2 "Members shall be all those who have paid the subscription agreed and shall be issued with a membership card and a copy of the Rules to be replaced by "Members shall be all those who have paid the subscription agreed and shall be issued with a membership number and a copy of the Rules".

Barbara Luke requested that a list of those on the committee of the Society be included in the membership letter.

The change to the Rules was approved proposed by Steve Ripley and seconded by Helen McCulloch.

Members expressed their thanks to the Committee for the year's work.

GLH.

Chairman's Report 20/1/17

I asked my wife Angela for some tips on what to say in this speech. She dared me to just say "There were a lot of birds"!

Well..... We saw a lot of birds. But I believe with the MBS, the emphasis is on the quality of the experience, and not just the number of the birds. Friendly, non-competitive, and mutually helpful, it's that cooperative spirit that makes the MBS so enjoyable.

I'm not going to go over our activities in any detail here – Marion's excellent summary of the 2015-16 season has been available for months on the website, and I have a few copies printed out here tonight... <http://www.birdsmb.org.uk/MBS2015-16review.pdf>

What I would like to do is just point out a few things the Marylebone Birdwatching Society has achieved over the year.

As agreed at the AGM, our coach trips went from a multiple pick up system to a single pick up point. The unified Euston pick up has clearly been a move in the right direction, giving us plenty of loo's, cafes, supermarkets and newsagents on hand, and far better transport connections.

As a result, we are getting out of London much quicker, and we are actually arriving an hour earlier on some of our coach trips. Thanks to Andrew peel for continuing to lead our coach trips so ably.

Thanks in large part to the work of Steff Turton, our new Membership Secretary, and Marion Hill, we have moved to making it easier to pay electronically, and we are now accepting payments for both coach trip bookings and membership online via PayPal.

Speaking of membership, our numbers are good and getting better. Over the 2015-16 season our membership rose to 125, and I can reveal that, hot off the press news, our numbers have continued to increase. We are actually up to 138 now!

(Steff interjected she'd received No 139 that very day.)

Thanks to Gaye Henson, and Jean Clarke, attendances for our indoor meetings are also increasing, and our Tuesday Heath Walks led by Meg Game are keeping strong, with an aggregate number in the 20's most weeks, joined by friends and guests from across the globe.

Joyce Huggins has very capably set up a full programme of local trips, and continues to show the same persuasive powers that Lynette used to exercise in finding Local Trip leaders. (Talking of which, I will be leading at Rainham tomorrow).

So, as you see, I think the 2015-16 season saw the MBS in very good heart indeed.

To conclude; if someone asked me to sum up what the MBS had to offer over the last season, I couldn't do better than to quote Marion who put it beautifully in her "30 Days Wild" Blog for the Wildlife Trusts – she was talking about our coach trip to Thursley Common but what she said captures the MBS perfectly....

She wrote... "It was great to be able to spend 5 hours in the wild, in good company and with lovely scenery".....

It is very trendy for organisations to have a Mission Statement now. If we were to have one, I like to think it would be the words of American naturalist and writer Henry David Thoreau. He said, "The question is not what you look at, but what you see".

As we progress through our 36th Season, we can all hope to look at things with a more informed eye, and see more of the natural world around us. It's what we are all doing, learning to see; and I can think of no finer a body of people to do it with. Thank you.

Steve Ripley, Chairman, Marylebone Birdwatching Society. January 20th 2017.