



MARYLEBONE BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

Minutes of the 42nd Annual General Meeting held on Friday 15th September 2023 via Zoom

1. **Attendance:** There were 26 members in attendance.
2. **Apologies for absence:** Jean Clarke, Anne Charvet
3. **Minutes of the last AGM held 23rd September 2022:** Acceptance proposed by Barbara Luke and approved by the majority of the membership.
4. **Matters arising from the minutes:** Nil.
5. **Chairman's report on the Society's activities in the 21/22 season:** See below.
6. **Treasurer's report:**
 - Judy presented the draft accounts. The surplus income over expenditure was £2761. There was a healthy surplus on coach outings plus £1000 legacy from Silver Green, a founder member of the society who always kept an interest in the club. The general funds available are just under £12,000 with an additional £1000 available from the Silver Green bequest. There was a negative balance on the Spring Party, but this was valued by members as an enjoyable social event. The accounts have not been examined by Richard Campbell and he needs to be contacted again. Richard Cryan has offered to examine last years (if needed) and this season's accounts and is to be elected as the accounts' examiner for the society.
 - Acceptance of the financial report was proposed by Emily Roth and accepted by the majority of the membership.
7. **Election of auditor/examiner:**
 - The 22/23 accounts were in the process of being examined by the auditor, Richard Campbell but there is a degree of uncertainty as to whether he is/ was able to do it. It was, therefore, proposed that Richard Cryan acts as a backup to examine the accounts for 22/23.
 - Acceptance of Richard Cryan as the accounts' examiner for the current season, and 22/23 season if Richard Campbell is unable to do it, was proposed by Andy Strouthous and accepted by the majority of the members present.
8. **Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee representative report:** See below.
9. **Election of committee**
Members offering themselves to be re-elected to the Committee:
 - Steve Ripley Chairman
 - Frances Tatnall Secretary
 - Jean Clarke Membership Secretary
 - Judy Powell Treasurer
 - Marion Hill Publicity/ Coach booking secretary
 - Gaye Henson Indoor meeting organiser/Hampstead Heath Consultative
 Committee representative

- Joyce Huggins Local meetings organiser
- Andrew Peel Coach outings leader

Judy is happy to be re-elected as treasurer for this year, but she wishes to retire from the committee. We are, therefore, looking for a new treasurer and volunteers are welcome. The task should become easier as Judy is moving the account to electronic banking.

Neville Robinson proposed that the committee is re-elected, and this was accepted by the majority of the members present.

10. Plans for the 23/24 season:

- The programme for Zoom meetings, local and coach outings is now established. We hope that weekends away will be arranged, possibly with visits to observatories which may have a lower cost. In the coming year we hope our banking can be switched to online banking.

11. Any other business:

- Barbara Luke proposed that thanks were offered to the committee for all the work that it does for the Society.
- Marion reported that the Springett Lecture, named after our founder Kate Springett, will be given on September 28th at 7.30 pm at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, NW3 on ‘Hampstead Heath and climate change’ and will be delivered by Jonathan Meares.

Frances Tatnall, Club Secretary

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Representative on Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee Report 2022/2023

Gaye Henson has continued to be the MBS representative on the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee. 3 monthly meetings have continued throughout the last year with the usual committee meeting walk prior to the meeting to discuss agenda items. Committee meetings are now back to taking place ‘face to face’ with the option of a ‘Microsoft Teams’ link. The in-person meetings have proved to be much more satisfactory.

These are useful meetings to hear about plans for the very varied aspects of activities on the Heath as well as being given the opportunity to be asked for opinions and advice on various issues. I am glad to say that environmental issues are high priorities. There was a useful update from the Heath Constabulary on one of the Heath walks about their workload and ways of working.

Professional dog walking numbers on the Heath remains somewhat contentious but I am assured the figures suggest that the licensing scheme has reduced numbers as well as complaints.

In the past week a new Superintendent/Assistant Director (Bill LoSasso) has started as well as a new Head of Operations and Parks for NLOS- North London Open Spaces (Charlotte Williams) both of whom have strong ecological/environmental backgrounds.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to contribute to and be involved with the Consultative Committee.

Again we have contributed to Display Boards on the Heath organised by the Heath and Hampstead Society.

GLH 15.9.2023

MBS Chairman's Speech 2023

Looking back, the Season 2022 to 2023 was very busy. As well as our usual full programme of local outings, coach trips and zoom meetings, we also ran four trips away with Oriole Birding, in September, December, March and June. Every one of them took place in the teeth of the long-running (or rather non-running) disputes between the train companies and the unions. The low point was when we booked a private minibus to get us to Norfolk because of a strike day, only to have the strike postponed as the Queen's funeral was taking place!

Looking back at the Local outings...

Our season started with a first in September, as Paul Seber, a Tuesday Heath walk regular, led us around a new local outing site, Charvil Country Park and Loddon Nature Reserve. One outstanding memory for most of us was fantastic views of a pair of Goldcrests, close up and incredibly trusting.

(Photo of Goldcrests by Rhona Richardson)



October found us having to be flexible, something we are pretty good at! A Rail Replacement service ruled out our planned trip to Oare Marshes, and instead we decamped to Rainham. Sadly, the boardwalk was still under repair which made for a slightly disjointed day. The highlight for a lucky few were the Bearded tits, but the wind was a bit too strong for a large haul of birds.

Also in October, very unusually, our Coach outing became a Local outing as our coach to Keyhaven didn't turn up. (I'm glad to say it wasn't our fault)! Some quick thinking by Andrew saved the day, as he led us to the Tower of London and then to the welcoming embrace of the train to Leigh-on-Sea for an impromptu trip to Two Tree Island. Highlights of the day for me were a flypast Peregrine, and a rather lovely bag of freshly cooked whelks, bought at one of the many seafood stalls in the old town, and eaten furtively at the back of the group!

Our pre-Christmas walk around Regent's Park coincided with Marion's birthday, and the vocal talents of the combined members were tested singing Happy Birthday, led by yours truly. I don't think Marion will be inviting us to join one of her choirs any time soon.

January started with another first as we had a local trip to Ruislip woods and Lido. It was a great start to the New Year, with frost and ice, blue skies and sunshine. Perfect birding weather!

February was busy, with a second trip (this time planned) to Two Tree Island. The next day saw a joint MBS and LNHS Bird Club walk over Hampstead Heath. Over 40 people attended but there were plenty of knowledgeable co-leaders to help out.



March saw a hardy few defying a weather forecast of continuous rain at Fairlop – one of those locations that can be flat, or be great. Some inspiring birds such as Skylarks singing in the rain, and the first calling ChiffChaffs of the season made the day. Our ethos of having a single leader but sharing the spotting duties made for a good day out.

April found me with a handful of birders (I think the phrase is “a Select Group”), leading them around Rainham Marshes, though I think clashing with an RSPB coach trip to Knepp contributed to the small numbers. The group had a lovely flypast Kingfisher, and the highlight was undoubtedly the amazing views we had of a perched-up Cetti’s warbler, a rare sight indeed.

In May we were in Cheshunt; a lovely day, with Spring in full force, Cuckoos seen and Nightingales heard. We had the pleasure of the company of an American birder who had contacted us from Oregon and joined us for the day. It was great to share the joy of springtime in Southern England.

Our last local outing of the year was back to the Lee Valley, this time to Amwell. One of our MBS birders, Francis O’Sullivan was leading a walk there for the London Bird Club half an hour before we were arriving! There was plenty of cross-membership amongst the members, and tipoffs were exchanged between the groups. Cuckoos and Hobbies were again the early Summer highlights.

With Regard to the Coach Trips...

After Anderson’s mistake in October, our first actual Coach outing of the season was November’s trip to Pulborough Brooks in West Sussex. Andrew wasn’t available but had arranged for Nigel Dodd to lead in his stead. The undoubted highlight for most was not one, but two White Tailed Eagles.

In December we fitted in a re-scheduled Keyhaven trip, with good numbers of birds on a cold, sunny day. Similar weather met us in January, when we went to Abberton Reservoir in Essex.



We were in East Sussex in February for a trip to Rye Harbour. Without doubt the outstanding memory for everyone present will be the extended views we had of a mixed pair of Marsh Harriers in perfect light, quartering the reed beds for a number of minutes. (Photo of Marsh Harrier by George Blair)

In March, adverse spring winds at Dungeness kept the migrant numbers down, but we still had Peregrines, a Raven, Great White Egret and even a Stoat!

April brought us Nightingales heard and seen at Fingringhoe in Essex. (Photo of Fingringhoe Nightingale by Charlotte Weddell).

And May had Nigel again leading to Minsmere.

June saw the last coach trip of the season, out to Acres Down and Bolderwood in the New Forest, Hampshire.



All-in-all, we had good numbers of birds seen on the coach trips. 7 had 60+ seen, with one trip (Minsmere) netting 88. We had plenty of new faces on the coach trips, and the last couple of trips were the first we ran with the option of a full capacity coach, back to normal from the earlier restricted numbers of COVID days. Bookings have recovered well, and we had 50 booked for Minsmere, though only 46 made it.

Indoor (Zoom) Meetings...

As always, Gaye had arranged a full programme of speakers, starting with our old friend Gehan on birding hotspots in London. Adrian Brooker took us to Hampstead Heath with an ecologist’s view, and over the season we also took in Costa Rica, the Andes and Knepp re-wilding project. Gaye also provided an enjoyable, if occasionally fiendish, Christmas Quiz.

Another highlight of a packed season was our Spring gathering at St. Anne's in Highgate. Just over 50 of us assembled to eat, drink and hear the amazing vocal talents of the band Broomdasher, featuring our own Richard Cryan. Enormous thanks from me and everyone who attended to Gaye, Joyce, Marion, Frances, Neville (.,,and daughter Emilia) who put in a lot of work both in the planning and on the night.

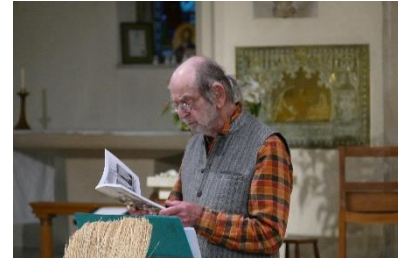


Photo of poet in residence Denis Herbstein reading the poem he wrote for our 2021 40th Anniversary.

Our Situation...

I'm pleased to say the MBS is thriving. Our membership reached a new high of 166, 31 of which were new joiners. Our Coach trips are attracting good numbers, and we are now looking towards fuller coaches. We are seeing lots of new faces throughout the year. As usual, many thanks to Marion for the huge amount of work she does publicising the club. The Mailchimp mailing lists are now being sent to over 500 subscribers.

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to all of the Committee who have worked hard to make this year packed full of interest and multi-faceted!

I am pleased to say that all the Committee have agreed to stand again. I would though like to take this opportunity to ask if anyone with financial experience would like to help us out. Judy, our Treasurer, is looking to step away from her role, so please speak up this evening or email one of us if you think you could help in the future. We are looking at implementing online banking, and we would hope to get this in place before any new Treasurer joins us. Judy would, of course, meet any successor and arrange a handover.

Thank you all for listening. I wish you all the very best for the birding season to come!

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PS from Marion: Pictures added to avoid having just one short paragraph on 3rd page.



You'll find more photos of our activities posted on [MBS 2020 Vision | Facebook](#) along with photos taken by MBS members on their local patch or on holiday. Mary Holden regularly posts birds from Wanstead Flats such as this Spotted Flycatcher.

Whereas I'm more likely to post pictures of birders looking at (or for) birds on our weekly Hampstead Heath walks.



Stonechat 20.9.22 and Kingfisher 12.9.23

