

Butterfly Conservation
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch

2013 Annual General Meeting



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Hants and Isle of Wight Branch – 2013 Annual General Meeting

Saturday 26th October 2013

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Caroline Dudley, Lynn Fomison, Mike Gibbons, Arthur Greenwood, Mary Gwilliam, Mike Gwilliam, Tim Norriss and Nick Radcliffe.

2. Minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting.

The minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting were unanimously confirmed as an accurate record.

Proposed: Andy Barker. Seconded: Mervyn Grist.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes.

There were no matters arising.

4. Presentation of Accounts.

Pete Eeles presented the accounts for 2012/2013. Summary sheets were available at the meeting. The accounts had been independently audited and approved by BC Head Office.

Total expenditure exceeded income by £5,728. This is almost entirely due to VAT costs.

Total Income was £55,318. This is £4,050 higher than 2011/2012, £3,576 of which is due to a one-off grant from South Downs National Park Authority. Income from Subscription, Grants and Dividends and Interest was consistent with 2011/2012.

Total Expenditure was £61,046 (excluding Designated Funds). This is £8,689 more than 2011/2012. The cost of managing the reserves was £4,698 higher than 2011/12. This is mainly due to the replacement cost of fencing and gates at Magdalen Hill Down. The VAT cost was £7,883 higher due to a prior year Head Office adjustment of £3,268 (the difference was £1,347 without this adjustment). Other costs were fairly consistent year on year.

Designated Fund Balances are: Major Projects (£27,300), Reserves Management (£32,000), June Bailey Education Fund (£10,810). Expenditure against the Major Projects Fund was £2,700 for legal costs for the Magdalen Hill Down Allotment Fields. Expenditure against the Education Fund was £300 for an Education Grant.

Investments were valued at £139,395 on 31 March 2013, representing an unrealised gain of £12,989. It was noted that if these investments were sold they would be re-valued on the date of their sale. £5,000 of investments were sold in the year. The profit on the sale of these was £1,302.

A 10 year lease was taken out with the Church Commissioners for the Allotment Field which adds 9 acres to the Magdalen Hill Down site. The annual lease payment is £700.

No significant changes to ongoing income and expenditure levels are expected in 2013/2014. Expenditure from the Reserves Designated Fund is planned in 2013/14 for the replacement of fencing at Magdalen Hill Down. It was noted that the fencing on Magdalen Hill Down Original had been erected in the late 1980s. The life time of fencing varies significantly depending on the quality of the fence posts, from 5 – 40 years.

It was proposed that the accounts be formally accepted, and this was carried unanimously.

Proposed: Clive Wood. Seconded: Mike Wall.

5. Reports for Conservation, Information, Records and Reserves Sub-Committees.

a. Conservation sub-committee.

Andy Barker (Chairman of the Conservation sub-committee) reported on the five key activities of the sub-committee during the past year:

Sparsholt College (chalk grassland strip): The Branch had contributed £350 for seeds for a reseeded initiative. Nutrient rich top soil had been removed and students had prepared the ground. A year later the grassland strip proved to be a haven for small blue and common blue butterflies, taking full advantage of the kidney vetch and birds-foot trefoil and nectar from other wild flowers.

Duke of Burgundy: The “Dukes on the Edge” project involved a great deal of survey work and liaising with local landowners. Duke of Burgundy butterflies have been found on National Trust land on the opposite side of the road to Stockbridge Down. This initiative has demonstrated the importance of joining up landscapes.

Shipton Bellinger - Brown hairstreak surveys: In addition to Brown hairstreak there have also been sightings of Wall butterflies in the Shipton Bellinger area. If anyone is interested in doing transect walking in this area they should contact Andy Barker.

Species champions: Head office has initiated a countrywide network of species champions for priority butterfly species. As a Branch we now have a species champion for each priority species. If anyone is interested in doing surveys on priority species they should contact Andy Barker.

Species trends: On the Branch website there are now graphs of species trends. Next year we aim to show trend graphs for Hampshire alongside those for the country as a whole.

b. Information sub-committee

Roger Buchanan (Chairman of the Information sub-committee) presented the report.

Membership records are managed by Pat Turner. The number of households on the database is 1350, 1146 of which are active. 847 are single, 276 are joint and 23 are family memberships. Other Branches are more successful at recruiting new members via their current membership.

Roger Buchanan encouraged attendees to look for opportunities to recruit new members to the Branch.

The website continues to be developed and has a dedicated members' section. The arrangements for uploading sightings onto the website are to be automated in the coming year. There is an option to opt out of receiving paper copies of newsletters and the annual report. Members are encouraged to opt out, in order to reduce printing and postage costs and to enable the Branch to use its funds on conservation / reserves management initiatives. Currently only 125 households have opted out of a paper copy of the newsletter and 88 households have opted out of a paper copy of the annual report.

There are two newsletters produced each year. There was a request for more people to submit articles. An on-line version of each newsletter is available in the Members' area of the Branch website.

Over the year a Display Working Group had been set up to update the display materials used at events. This has been very successful and the branch is grateful to Dan Powell for his artwork that has been a key part of the new materials.

The Branch needs a central events co-ordinator who can act as a focal point for all events and hold the various materials / displays required for event attendance. Attendees were asked to express interest in volunteering to assist with events by signing the form that was circulated at the AGM. Attendees were also asked to indicate on the form whether they would be happy for the Branch to send them emails on specific topics.

The new Walks co-ordinator is Ashley Whitlock. Planned walks are publicised in the April newsletter. The Branch is keen to promote more impromptu walks.

Roger Buchanan stood down as Chair of Information sub-committee at the AGM. Clive Wood is the new Chair.

Linda Barker is standing down from the sub-committee and was thanked for her major contribution to the work of the sub-committee and the Branch. She will continue to be involved in transect recording.

c. Records sub-committee

Tim Norriss (Chair of the Records Sub-committee) fell ill on the morning of the AGM and was unable to present a report of the Records sub-committee. In Tim's absence, Mike Wall, a member of Records sub-committee, asked for volunteers to help with the preparation of the annual report now that Dave Green has left the Branch. It was agreed that Tim's report should be circulated with the minutes and now follows:

Committee

Dave Green, Ken Bailey and Robin Turner have stood down from the Records Subcommittee so it now comprises Tim Norriss (chair), Paul Brock, Simon Curson, Kelvin Richards and Mike Wall.

Linda Barker and Pam Welch continue being Transect Co-ordinators.

Dave Green has been presented with a painting of Wood Whites, by Rosemary Powell, in recognition of the huge contribution that he has made to the Branch.

Records

78,833 butterfly records have been received for 2013. This compares to the previous highest total of 71,209 in 2011 making 2013 the highest to date.

114,185 moth records have been received for 2013. This compares to the previous highest of 126,442 in 2010.

A concerted effort has been made to get people to send in records electronically rather than on paper so the number of paper records is down substantially. It now stands at less than 2,000 each for both moths and butterflies. The checking and preparation of electronic records for import into Mapmate is time consuming and Kelvin Richards and Kevin Freeborn have helped greatly with this.

Annual Report 2012

The Annual Report was sent out slightly later than usual in mid-July.

d. Reserves sub-committee

Penny Jeffreys (member of the Reserves sub-committee) presented the report.

The Branch reserves now extend to 145 acres. The sub-committee aims to ensure that this land is in good condition for as many butterfly and moth species as possible. 2013 transect figures for the reserves in general showed significant increases over 2012:

- Over 10,000 butterflies were recorded at Magdalen Hill Down
- On Magdalen Hill Down the Extension saw a 100% increase, North Down saw a 150% increase and the Allotments had a very strong first year.
- Yew Hill was 50% higher (excluding Chalkhill blue counts)
- Bentley Station Meadow was nearly 3 times higher.

Magdalen Hill Down had experienced problems with poaching (men and dogs) which resulted in 3 sheep fatalities.

The Magdalen Hill Down Allotments area now has stock-proof fencing and a corral. A large amount of scrub clearance has also taken place. It is currently being grazed by sheep and cattle grazing will follow. Ragwort is well under control. The Allotments will be used for stock holding as we move stock between different areas of the reserve. Apart from legal costs the Branch did not have to fund any of the start-up costs of taking on the management of this area.

Yew Hill has required a considerable amount of fencing repair (which has been done at minimal cost due to a huge amount of volunteer effort). Work is currently ongoing to repair another length of fencing at Hilltop.

Bentley Station meadow has seen a transformation over the last year. It is now a meadow again (rather than a woodland glade) and there has been a large increase in butterfly numbers on transect. For the first time Dark green fritillary have been recorded. Its SSSI status is now 'favourable'. In 2014 sheep will graze the area.

This winter all the reserves will be grazed free of charge with cattle and sheep from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. We have doubled the number of cattle at Yew Hill and all livestock were brought on 6 weeks earlier than any previous year. Currently, there are over 100 livestock across our 3 Reserves. The majority will be taken off by the 16th November to coincide with the HIWWT's annual TB test (thus saving us added expense). In addition we have taken haycuts on parts of MHD and retained some bales on site for feeding cattle in the event of a harsh winter.

In 2013 there were many pre-booked walks and lots of repeat bookings. These were generally very well attended especially as the season progressed and the weather improved.

Over the year there have been 20 work-parties. At Magdalen Hill Down North a considerable amount of scrub and thatch has been removed. This winter the focus is on scrub removal at the bottom of the slopes on Magdalen Hill Down Original. If anyone is interested in getting involved in this work they should speak to Jayne Chapman or Abby Sullivan.

Next year we need more transect walkers for Magdalen Hill Down. Anyone who is interested should contact Jenny Mallet.

The sub-committee reports were accepted by members en bloc unanimously.

Proposed: Peter Leversha. Seconded: Peter Gardiner.

6. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman, Pete Eeles, reported that there had been a number of successful events over the year including the Moth Conference, the New Members Day and The Inter-Branch Branch Big Butterfly Race against Sussex Branch. Upcoming events are the National AGM (held in Swindon) on 16th November 2013 and the International Symposium (held in Southampton) in April 2014 (details are available on the Butterfly Conservation website).

Pete Eeles stood down as Branch Chair at the AGM. He thanked members of Main Committee and sub-committees for their support over his years as chair and also expressed gratitude to all the volunteers on whom the Branch depends.

7. Election of Committee Members.

Pete Eeles is standing down as Chair but will continue to serve on Main Committee. Mike Wall had been elected by Main Committee as the new Chair and Clive Wood had been elected as vice chair.

There were three members standing down from Main Committee: Roger Buchanan, Brian Fletcher and Dave Green. Pete Eeles thanked Roger Buchanan for his long service to the Branch and expressed his gratitude for Roger's support to him when he took over the role of Branch

Chair. Andy Barker thanked Brian Fletcher, both personally and behalf of the Branch for his 25 years of service including his roles as Information sub-committee chair, co-ordinator of the Yew Hill transect, his many talks and his involvement with walks and events. Mike Wall and Pete Eeles expressed their thanks to Dave Green for his contribution to the Branch, especially his major role in the production of the Annual Report.

The following members are standing down but seeking re-election: Andy Barker, Julie Bloss and Tim Norriss.

It was agreed to vote on the re-election of members en-bloc. This was passed unanimously.

Proposed: Mervyn Grist. Seconded: Ashley Whitlock.

8. Health and Safety Matters.

There were no health and safety issues to report.

9. Any Other Business.

The June Bailey Education Fund has grants of up to £500 available. Details are available on the Branch website.

The Branch is considering running a photography workshop over the winter to give guidance on processing and presentation of photographs.

The meeting closed at 15.01 hours.