



Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch

Minutes of AGM held at Christchurch Abbeydale, Heron Way, Abbeydale, Gloucester, GL4 5EQ, at 2 pm on Saturday 7th November 2015

Branch Chairman, Sue Smith, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Approximately 53 members were present.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Rose & Rob Mabbett, Richard Morris, Helen Carver, Andrew Bishop, Simon Barker, Andrew Kerr, Cath Hodsmen, Celia Tanner, Nigel Bridges, Jane Rowe, Pat Raddon, Paul Matthews, Martin Matthews, Martin Wright and Mike Bradley.
2. **Minutes of the last AGM**
The minutes from the 2014 AGM were adopted – proposed by Vic Polley, seconded by Pauline Lillico.
3. **Matters arising from the 2013 AGM minutes**
None.
4. **Reports from Branch Officers**

4.1 Chairman's Report – Sue Smith (SS)

Work has continued much as before on all the reserves, together with recording and general activities within the branch. The garden at Prinknash is still developing and Open Days see people visit from far and wide. The branch funds continue to be in a healthy position. Changes to the composition of the committee continue with the loss of Jo Stafford and Chris Tracey and new members coming on. Thanks were expressed to Chris and Jo for all their efforts.

It is planned to reissue the 2008 Walks Booklet in the spring of 2016.

Moth and butterfly interest remains high in the county, with moths taking a much higher profile than previously.

Members were reminded of the branch website and what they could find there, together with a request for more photos and blogs. They were also reminded also about the winter indoor meetings at Shurdington and Minchinhampton.

Training days for butterflies and transects were run but attendance for the ID day were lower than other years and the transect day was very poorly attended.

Details regarding other activities during the year will be highlighted in separate reports.

The chair thanked members of the committee and others for their continued support.

4.2 Treasurer's Report – Dave Labdon (DL)

The accounts were presented in full; however, a summary for the financial year 2014-15 is shown below :

Bank Balance at 1 st April 2014	£18,584.71
Receipts	17,152.40
Unpresented Cheque	£175
Payments	-14,528.21
Balance at 31 st March 2015	21,383.90

The most notable item of expenditure was the donation of £10,000 to Butterfly Conservation Head Office under the Match Pot scheme, which results in them receiving £100,000.

Acceptance of Accounts:

Andrew Daw proposed the Accounts were accepted and Tricia Atkinson seconded them, all agreed.

4.3 Membership Report - Tricia Atkinson (TA)

Membership has been rising at a slow steady rate through the year. The latest report from Head Office includes 20 new members, giving a total of 564 household members comprising 714 adult members in the branch. That is a net increase of 54 household members in the last 12 months. This is partly due to Head Office giving half-price or free membership provided that the person signs up by direct debit.

Tricia gave a warm welcome to the new members attending their first AGM and hoped they will enjoy being part of the branch.

The branch receives £6 per member household which helps our finances, but the main benefit of extra members is in the contribution they make helping with recording, at work parties and with other activities. It also makes our field trips and meetings more worthwhile if more members come along to these events.

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

Early Spring promise of the good post-hibernation show faded away and things did not really pick up thereafter.

The very dry Spring did not help those to follow and poor weather in August was not much help although September and October improved.

Skippers

Small Skipper numbers were average except on Gawcombe South where numbers were high (peak 482, total 1415).

Essex Skipper numbers well up on recent years and Large Skippers did reasonably well.

Dingy and Grizzled Skipper numbers were below average.

Whites

Wood White was found in reasonable numbers on new sites (unlike rest of UK).

Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Green-veined Whites, Large White and Small Whites were generally below average with the exception of a few sites.

Orange Tip seemed to do less well in open sites but higher numbers around woodland sites.

Lycaenids

Green and Purple Hairstreaks, Small Copper, Small Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Brown Argus and Duke of Burgundy had generally low numbers.

White Letter Hairstreak, Large Blue and Common Blue by contrast did quite well.

Chalkhill Blue has declined on many sites but did well around Swellshill.

Brown Hairstreak adults and eggs were found in the Gloucestershire part of the Cotswold Water Park.

Nymphalids

White Admiral, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell numbers were down on recent years.

Painted Lady in contrast had quite a good year with some early arrivals, a lull then more in summer.

Peacock was around in good numbers post hibernation but their offspring were not abundant in summer.

Comma did have quite a good year with numbers up on many sites.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary did not fare well and is causing great concern (only 2 sites remain).

Dark Green Fritillary numbers were generally down but a few sites did well.

Silver Washed Fritillary did very well on some sites (Lower Woods) - probably above average.

Marsh Fritillary had a very good year with record numbers seen at its only site.

Browns

Speckled Wood numbers were down on most sites.

The Wall continues its decline with only a few records reported so far.

Marbled White on the other hand had an above average year.

Gatekeeper numbers were up and slightly better than average.

Meadow Brown numbers were much lower than recent years except on Stinchcombe Hill where they bucked the trend.

Ringlet managed an average year but Gawcombe South had a 47% increase with a peak count of 1010 and a total of 3187, a record for the site if not the county.

Small Heath numbers were down and not seen on some sites.

Oddities

There were a few interesting records this year with a Wood White on Edge Common, a Silver-studded Blue at Daneway Banks, a Camberwell Beauty in Cheltenham and His Majesty the Purple Emperor near Stow.

As reported in Antennae – a BELOW AVERAGE year!

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

The annual Plumed Prominent event is about to take place at Lineover Wood and Crickley Hill in addition to a few private events in other areas for those unable to attend the main meeting.

It was a slow start to the season with many cold, clear, moonlit nights, resulting in many reports of empty traps. Numbers overall have been slightly lower than last year but quite a few new species have turned up to compensate for this. The Pine Hawk moth now seems to be established in the county, having been absent until a few years ago and there have been many reports of migrant moths including Hummingbird Hawk moths and two reports of Deaths Head Hawk moth amongst other migrants. Many nights with Southerly or South-easterly winds resulted in many more migrant species.

Moth recording has continued at Rough Bank. Peter has made at least 20 visits with traps so far this year and added a few new species. The total of 592 species in just three years, of which 320 are micro species, reflect the challenges of recording macros here as it is difficult to get the heavy equipment onto the site.

The new ranger at Forest Holidays, near Coleford is keen to promote moths and butterflies. He already has one of the branch moth traps and in future we plan to run moth and butterfly events in this very under-recorded area. There has been the usual selection of moth events, including a very successful Moth and Butterfly identification course at Hawkwood College, organised by GWT and GNS. This morning only event may become an all-day event in future. Bob Smith has stepped in to run some events to satisfy the increased demand.

This year Peter has been overwhelmed by requests to run traps, run events, look at habitats identify moths, supply loan traps, record for key sites and the Wider Countryside Survey as well as attend Work Parties, etc.

Interest in moths continues to grow steadily. Guy's moth maps (there is a link to these on the branch website) are well known and he has now produced a link for smart phones. This enables the user to type in the first few letters of a moth name and be offered a selection of moth names starting with those letters. The distribution map for the moth will then be displayed. Guy has extended this to a list (without maps) for Rough Bank only.

And finally, in addition to the Gloucestershire Butterfly and moth forum there is now a Gloucestershire Moth's Face book page, which is extremely active and can be used to advertise moth events in the county. This enables events to be arranged at short notice and does seem to increase attendance. The link to this site is: Tinyurl.com/nc2fbn but it is a closed site so you will need to request membership via the site.

4.6 Bill Smyllie/The Masts Reserve Manager's Report – John Coates (JC)

Work continues on the clearing of scrub, whitebeam and ash and on general improvements to the site, such as fencing areas of heather to allow it to regenerate and propagating rare varieties of moss.

Reserves officer Lucy Morton and Paul Hackman of Natural England have also been pleased with progress on the site. They suggested the clearing of whitebeam to create a scrape which would provide shelter from the wind and areas for butterflies to bask.

Vandalism continues to be a problem but damaged gates were replaced in time to allow the cattle to graze.

The wildflowers did well this year including good shows of Musk and Bee Orchids.

There were many Duke of Burgundy butterflies on the Masts Reserve, though less on Bill Smyllie. Dingy Skippers, Small Blues and Chalkhill Blues all did well.

There are plans for a **work party** on the weekend of **5/6 March 2016** and more volunteers are always needed for this site to help continue the good work of improving the habitat. Please come – you will be made very welcome! Also any members interested in joining the Prestbury Committee for this site, please contact Sue Smith. Tricia Atkinson or John Coates via the BC website.

4.7 Rough Bank Report – Sue Smith

Work has continued apace on Rough Bank with new hedging and stone walling. As part of their flood alleviation programme, Stroud District Council has created three bunds (two in Little Myers and one in Great Myers). Hopefully the work done won't make a significant difference to the site and it will be interesting to see if any different flora is thrown up due to the soil disturbance. The Belted Galloway cattle are again munching their way through the sward on Rough Bank. Meat from these animals is sometimes available – I recently bought some and it was very tender and tasty! Moth recording has continued throughout the year but more of that in the Moth Officer's Report. The transect has been also been walked but overall butterfly numbers appear to be lower than other years. Work parties for the winter have now been organised and are in Antennae and on the website. All are welcome!

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

The Wood White, unusually in the UK, is doing reasonably well in the Forest of Dean. The Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary is in gradual decline, despite help from the Forestry Commission. Grazing is a key issue for the area; the Foot and Mouth crisis restricted grazing resulting in scrub which needs clearing to enable effective grazing. The second site for this butterfly, at Linear Park, is under threat from development.

The proposed Northern Quarter development (a new college, industrial buildings, hotel and attendant infrastructure) is a prime wildlife site with 1300 known species, and probably a similar number of species not yet recorded. Fourteen thousand newts and reptiles were moved from one cleared area, showing the biodiversity of the site. The Dean Natural Alliance is fighting the proposal and supporters can donate to the fight via Pay Pa1 on the DNA website <http://www.deannaturalalliance.org/>. The legal challenge is still at the appeal stage.

Heritage Lottery Funding of £3 million for the Forest of Dean is in progress and will be run by an umbrella organisation headed by the Forestry Commission. The money will be used for various projects including ones aimed at helping the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary.

4.9 Butterfly Monitoring in Gloucestershire – Tricia Atkinson

Butterfly monitoring operates at several different levels. Transects involve recording butterflies along a pre-determined route every week from April until end of September. The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey records a specific 1km square following a specified 2km route just twice a year, once in July and once in August. Key site recording involves recording at one of our 300 key sites - as often or as few times as you like and can record everywhere on the site rather than just either side of a specified route. Casual recording anywhere in Gloucestershire is also useful and can be done when you are out and about - or in your garden. More recorders are needed for the 'white squares'. These are 1km squares for which we have had no records sent in, not even a Meadow Brown or a Peacock - maps are available to locate these squares on the website. There is also the National Garden Butterfly Survey, the form for which can be found in the spring edition of the national magazine, Butterfly. The Big Butterfly Count runs for 3 weeks from mid-July until early August and is open to the general public as well as to members. All of these means of recording provide valuable data for our butterfly recorders who enter them into the Gloucestershire Butterfly database then pass them to the national database. The records are used to produce distribution maps for each species of butterfly.

Volunteers are always needed to help with transects, key sites (particularly in the north Cotswolds around Winchcombe, Northleach, Chedworth, Stow, etc) and recording for the Wider Countryside squares. See the next edition of Antennae in the spring for more details. If you can confidently id butterflies and fancy getting out into wonderful Cotswold countryside on a beautiful sunny day and see interesting and beautiful butterflies, well what's not to like?!

Please remember to send your key sites records to your area coordinator which is Sue Smith for the Stroud area, Vic Polley for the Dursley and Wotton area, Ken Cervenka for the Cirencester area, Simon Glover for the Forest of Dean area and Tricia Atkinson for everywhere else. They are collated and reformatted before being sent to Chris. Members with Smart phones, can record casual butterflies with an i-record app.

6. Election of Officers

6.1 New Committee Member

Paul Matthews was co-opted by the committee in the spring of 2015 due to Jo Stafford retiring from the committee and has already taken over Facebook and Twitter. Dave Sims was nominated to become a committee member at this AGM and has agreed to be Health and Safety Co-Ordinator. It was proposed that they both become full members of the committee - proposed by Paul Attaway, seconded by Chris Wiltshire, all agreed

6.2 Election of Officers

The following members were due to stand down from the committee (after three years) but were prepared to stand again. They were: Peter Hugo, Pauline Lillico, Ruth Wollen, Simon Glover. Proposed by Serena Meredith; seconded by Tricia Atkinson, all agreed.

6.3 Associate Member

Chris Tracey is standing down from the committee and will become an associate member. Sue thanked her for her many years of work on the committee and the valuable contribution she has made to the committee and also to the Pearl Bordered Fritillary in Cirencester Park.

6.4 Standing Down

Jo Stafford left the committee earlier in the year and the Chair thanked her for all her Publicity work and for bringing the branch up to date with Twitter and Facebook.

Dave Labdon expressed a wish at the AGM to stand down as treasurer and the Chair thanked him for all his work over the last 7 years.

Sue said that she plans to continue as Chair for one more year.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 A request was made for a new Treasurer so if anyone has the skills, or knows someone who would be suitable, then please contact the Chair or any member of the committee.

7.2 Chris Tracey mentioned a work party on the 6th December in Oakley Wood to help the Pearl Bordered Fritillary, for which volunteers are very welcome.

8. Date of next AGM

Confirmed as Saturday 29th October 2016 – details to be published in the Spring 2016 edition of Antennae and on the branch website/Twitter/Facebook.

The AGM closed at 15:30

John and Julia Crowther judged the many wonderful photos for this year's photographic competition.

Congratulations to:

UK Butterflies: 1st – Marsh Fritillary by Dave Sims

UK Moths: 1st – White Plume Moth by Dave Sims (also the overall winner)

Overseas Butterflies and Moths: 1st – Silver Studded Blues by Andrew Daw (Taken in the Imperial Palace Gardens, Tokyo)

First Time Entrants: 1st – Brimstone by Elspeth Williams

Finally, thanks go to Peter Cranswick, Head of Species Recovery, from Slimbridge WWT, for his very interesting and entertaining talk about Moths, proving unequivocally that they are far from being little brown jobs! Not only that, the caterpillars were amazing and the audience was enthralled by the wonderfully illustrated and inspiring talk.