

Chichester Natural History Society

Minutes from the 62nd Annual General Meeting held on 6 November 2024 at The Pallant Suite, Chichester

Committee members present: Christian Hance (Chairman), Ian Barnett (Treasurer), Claire Locke (Secretary), Viv Goodridge (Membership Secretary), Linda Smith (Indoor Meetings) and Gillian Hance (Outdoor Meetings)

There were 26 members present.

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM. Apologies for absence were received from: Jim Bagley, Daphne Flack, Rodney & Maria Wildman, David & Heather Hart, John & Philippa Arnott and Linda Kelsall-Barnett.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 1 November 2023.

No requests for amendments were received, so Ken Smith proposed and Terry Timblich seconded, that the 2023 AGM Minutes should be approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Annual Report.

The Chairman was very pleased to present his report on the Society in 2024 saying that the year has been busy, interesting and productive.

Since the last AGM, the Society had run about 30 events, plus members have used the Society's range of Natural History equipment on multiple occasions. The Society's successful operation depends on the enthusiastic hard work of a number of people and he thanked all those members who have contributed their time and effort. Whilst everyone who has helped was worthy of praise, the Chairman indicated that he would like specifically to thank his fellow committee members, the field outing leaders, Sylvia and her helpers who provide the refreshments at our evening meetings and Jamie Wood who has very skillfully and enthusiastically, stepped into the role of helping Helen maintain the website.

The evening lectures have been varied, interesting and well attended. They have covered a wide variety of topics from Michael Blencowe's "Long Walk Home", through Alison Barker talking on Sussex Dragonflies, to Sam Kelly's two part talk on conserving Churchyards and Adders. Linda Smith has proved expert at arranging this extensive range of lectures and he thanked her on the Society's behalf.

The field outings have continued to give us the opportunity to see and record local wildlife. Despite the impact of climate change and human activity, it is so refreshing and exhilarating to observe wildlife thriving in our local area. As at least two of our lecture speakers have told us - "getting out into the open air and observing wildlife, really is good for your health!" Whilst the weather does not always play ball e.g. the very damp trip to Prinsted, all of our trips have been memorable. Who can forget the crisp winter morning when John Arnott taught us how to identify trees from their twigs, or the sight of a bunch of 60-70 year olds walking through a wood staring at their mobile phones as we all learnt about the Merlin Bird ID app! Amongst several other outings, we enjoyed another magical trip to Lavington Common to hear and see Nightjars and an unusual trip to the New Forest to see a good selection of British reptiles. We are very grateful to those members who lead these walks and to Gill Hance for organising them.

We continued our work surveying Moths in members' gardens with the usual excitement when unpacking the trap and finding out which species had been attracted during the night.

It is amazing how many species live in our gardens without us being aware of them. The Chairman expressed his thanks to Tony Burnand for leading on this.

Over 10 years ago, the Society started working with the RSPB to carry out annual surveys at the newly created Medmerry Reserve. Under the expert leadership of John and then Philippa Arnott, we have carried out surveys looking at vegetational succession and the changes in the populations of dragonflies, damselflies, grasshoppers and crickets. We analysed the data after 5 years and published a paper, however after 11 years of surveying, we feel that as much data as is sensible has been gathered. We will therefore be stopping the Medmerry surveys but are considering other survey opportunities.

As individuals, members have continued to enjoy the use of the Society's bat detectors and other equipment e.g. the trail camera. Our automated bat detector has continued to yield interesting results. The number of members submitting phenology sheets was down this year on previous years, and the Chairman would encourage people to take part in this study as we have a good record of over 15 years results, which show both interesting and worrying trends.

As indicated at the start, our Society has been active and productive in 2024. Our membership has stayed around 160 and it is great to meet new people at our activities. As a Society we always try to keep increasing the scope and depth of our Natural History studies, if any member has ideas for lecture topics, field outing locations or new areas for study, please don't hesitate to discuss them with anyone on the committee.

3. Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer was pleased to report that the society's finances are in good health although income for the year ended 30 September 2024 was £2,005 being slightly down on the previous year due to the gift aid payment being delayed. However this is just a timing issue and should be rectified in 2025. Expenditure on normal activities amounted to £1,598 leaving a surplus on normal activities of £407.

The society holds legacy funds for specific projects and during the year received an incredibly generous donation from long standing member Brian Hopkins of £1,000. Expenditure from legacy funds was £227 leaving a total surplus for the year on all activities of £1,180. The sum of £227 was used to purchase a new trail camera which is a great piece of equipment available to all members to record wildlife activity in their gardens and elsewhere. If members have any ideas or projects that could make use of legacy funds then they were invited to speak with Christian or another member of the committee.

Cash and bank balances as at 30 September 2024 amounted to £12,925 represented by the general current account of £7,000, the project current account for legacy funds of £5,870 and cash of £55.

The Treasurer was also pleased to report that the new independent financial advisor, David Knight of the firm Carpenter Box, had already audited and confirmed the numbers for the year to 30 September 2024.

No requests for amendments were received, so Robert Watson proposed and Sylvia Gill seconded, that the Treasurer's report should be accepted.

4. Election of President.

The Chairman explained that the President is elected annually and although unfortunately he was absent from the AGM, Jim Bagley had indicated that he is happy to stand again. There were no objections or alternative nominations, so it was proposed by Chris Harvey and seconded by Paula Chatfield, that Jim should continue as President.

5. The election of the Chairman.

The Chairman explained that in accordance with the Rules of the Society a Chairman needed to be elected again this year and indicated that in the absence of any other nominations, he was happy to stand for re-election. In the absence of the President, the Secretary took over control of the AGM from the Chairman on a temporary basis while the vote took place. As there were no objections or alternative nominations, it was proposed by Richard Locke, and seconded by Terry Timblich, that Christian should continue as Chairman who then resumed control of the meeting. At this point Terry Timblich proposed a vote of thanks to Christian in recognition of his work as Chairman which was supported by all in attendance.

6. Election of the Independent Examiner.

As indicated above David Knight of Carpenter Box has now taken on the role of the Independent Examiner and this appointment was proposed by Linda Smith and seconded by Jamie Wood.