

**BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION
HERTFORDSHIRE & MIDDLESEX BRANCH
Annual General Meeting
Saturday 23rd March 2019**

held at Welwyn Civic Centre, Prospect Place, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 9ER

Present

Seventy two members were present

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Five apologies were received

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting – 24th March 2018

The minutes of last year's Annual General Meeting had been available to read on the Branch website and were agreed as read without correction.

Proposed: Ian Small

Seconded: Neil Holmes-Smith

All in favour

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising

4. Chairman's Report 2018 – Malcolm Hull

The Chairman's Report was made available to read in the Annual Review 2018

Many thanks to all who have contributed through the year including transect walkers, butterfly and moth recorders, committee members, conservation volunteers, BC staff and all members and supporters.

So much has happened during the year! My highlights are

- Big City Butterflies – Our conservation & education project in London has received Heritage Lottery Funding for the first phase. The branch has also agreed to contribute £2,000 from our funds. It will be run jointly with the three other BC branches that cover different parts of London and head office. Our plan is to employ two full time staff members, so our profile in London should be considerably increased. There will be a presentation at our Members Day event.
- Greenwood Park Butterfly Bank for Small Blues – Just before Xmas we heard that our Heritage Lottery Fund application has been successful. The construction of a chalk bank to provide habitat for Small Blue and other butterflies and moths will commence this year. The site is in a wildflower meadow owned by St Stephen's Parish Council and we are very grateful for their support. The public launch is now fixed for Sunday 6th May. Keep an eye out for more details in the next newsletter and events programme.
- Brown Hairstreak – Great to hear of adult sightings in Middx last summer and a steady stream of egg finds in new locations over the winter.
- Millhoppers Butterfly Reserve – Our reserve wardens have worked hard to get on top of all the many tasks required to run our nature reserve. The arrival of sheep to undertake conservation grazing in the autumn was very welcome and our thanks go to Paula, the other wardens and Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust for arranging this.
- BC's 50th Anniversary – The Branch and head office arranged a series of interesting events. We received a generous donation of books by our former President, Gordon Beningfield from his publisher. Remaining stocks will be for sale at Members Day at steeply discounted prices.

There's always more which could be done to help butterflies and moths. If you'd like to find out more and how you can get involved do speak to me or any of the other committee members, either at Members Day or any other time (contact details are on the website & the back of each newsletter)

Since my report last year there have been a number of committee changes: John Hollingdale, Margaret Huitson and Jez Perkins have all stood down and we are very grateful for their contributions over many years. John was a founder member of the Branch committee in 1995 and has contributed greatly in the roles of Treasurer, Field Trip organiser & Health and Safety officer as well as providing much help and support in many other ways.

Paula Reid, Christine Ridley and Chris Hilling as joined as members of the Committee at the start of the year and have contributed very fully to the success at Millhoppers, along with Peter Melitus, our fourth warden. Sue Campbell has also been co-opted to the committee and assumed the role of Treasurer, although she has now stood down.

5. Treasurer's Report 2018 – Malcolm Hull Acting Treasurer

The Treasurer's Report was made available to view in the Annual Review 2018

These accounts show the figures for the Branch General Account for our last financial year ending 31st March 2018. The closing balance for 2017/18 is £5,261.98 (2016/17 £4,798.13).

Income

Overall income increased in 2017/18 by 3% from £6,417.46 in 2016/17 to £6,610.55.

Annual subscription have increased by 18% from £4,878 to £5,760.

All other income for 2017/18 has decreased. Donation income has decreased by 30% from £477.50 to £333.47. Sales have decreased from £655.81 to £421.08. Miscellaneous income in 2016/17 was £205.41 which included £135 raffle and £60 event charges. In 2017/18 this decreased to £96 of raffle income.

Expenditure

Overall expenditure increased in 2017/18 by 3% from £5,954.83 to £6,146.70.

Newsletter costs are down from £4,021.64 in 2016/17 to £2,978.55 in 2017/18. Membership and office expenses have increased from £249.22 to £1,089.75. This is mainly due to the purchase of printer inks. Conservation expenses in 2017/18 included £460 of Wildflower seeds for Heartwood Forest and other miscellaneous expenses.

Fund transfers for 2017/18 were £81.43 to the Millhoppers Fund and £490 towards the Head office Moth Atlas.

Restricted Fund

During the year the branch received a donation of £918.57 specifically for upkeep of the Millhoppers Nature Reserve. The sum was kept in a separate Restricted Fund and the whole sum spent on equipment for the Reserve during the year. BC Head Office also paid directly for Millhoppers Equipment and training for the new wardens. A small sum was also contributed from the Branch General Account (see above). The Restricted Fund has now been closed and future branch payments relating to Millhoppers will be through the Branch General Account.

Many thanks to the head office staff, particularly Megan Marshall, who has managed our finances very efficiently during the year.

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH

FINANCIAL YEAR 1ST APRIL 2017 TO 31ST MARCH 2018

	2107/18		2016/17
Balance at 1st April	£4798.13		£4,335.50
<u>INCOME</u>		+/-	
		FROM 16/17	
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS	£5,760.00	18%	£4,878.00
GRANTS RECEIVED	-	-100%	£148.90
DONATIONS	£333.47	-30%	£477.50
MISC FUNDRAISING INCOME	£96.00	-53%	£205.41
SALES	£421.08	-36%	£655.81
VAT RETURNED FROM HMRC	-	-100%	£51.84
	£6,610.55	3%	£6,417.46
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>			
NEWSLETTER	£2978.55	-26%	£4,021.64
ROOM HIRE & COST OF MEETINGS	£513.52	70%	£301.64
MILLHOPPERS MANAGEMENT FUND	-	-100%	£50.00
MEMBERSHIP/OFFICE EXPENSES	£1089.75	337%	£249.22
GRANTS	-	-100%	£1,000.00
BRANCH INSURANCE	£41.72	-38%	£66.84
COST OF SALES-GOODS & MATERIALS	£373.93	140%	£156.00
VAT PAID ON EXPENDITURE @ 20%	-	-100%	£109.49
FUND TRANSFERS	£571.43		
CONSERVATION EVENTS & EQUIPMENT	£577.80		
	£6146.70	3%	£5,954.83
<u>Total funds at 31 March</u>	5,261.98	10%	£4,798.13

Malcolm Hull as acting Treasurer reported that the accounts were in good shape. £1,200 was allocated to the London Big Butterfly Project (HLF Funding) and £2,000 to the Small Blue Project (HLF Funding)

- *Question from the floor 'what was considered to be healthy'.*
The Acting Treasurer replied that much of our funding was part of the national subscription and as a result fairly guaranteed.
- The Secretary advised that a Treasurer was still required and hoped that a member would volunteer.

The accounts were accepted.

Proposed: Steve Kiln

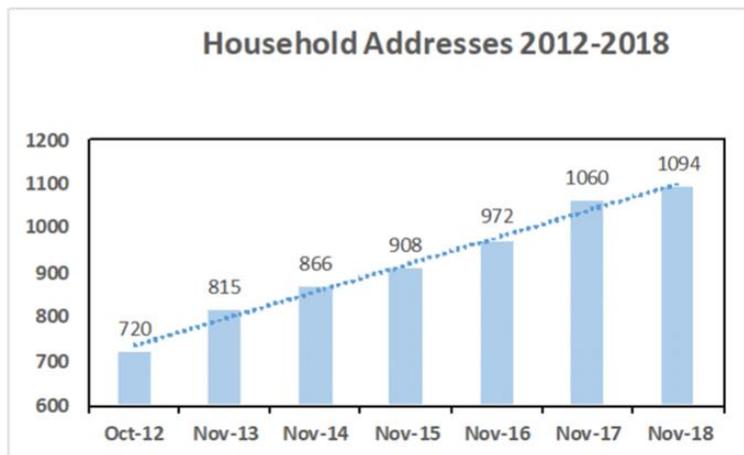
Seconded: Margaret Noakes

All in favour

6. Membership Report 2017-2018 – Ian Small

The Membership Report was made available to read in advance in the Annual Review 2017

Membership figures are compiled annually by Head Office at the beginning of November, allowing us to track the growth of our own Branch, but also to compare it with the fortunes of other BC Branches. The latest figures show a mixed picture. On the one hand, we had an increased accrual of new members from 182 households, 20 higher than the previous year. However, this coincided with an unusually high attrition rate of 14%, leading to a net increase of only 34 households (3.2%) compared to the previous year, to a new total of 1094 households. Two other Branches had similarly low attrition rates, but it is disappointing that we have not been able to retain a higher proportion of our members.



The largest BC Branch is now West Midlands, with 1696 households, an increase of 10% this year. Our close neighbours, Surrey, and Cambs & Essex Branches, also both grew around 10% this year and now have 1385 and 1342 households respectively, making them the 6th and 7th largest Branches. We remain 11th largest of the 31.

Our dedicated 'New Members Day' event was again well attended and was blessed with good weather for a change, allowing those present the opportunity to view a good range of species during the accompanying walk around Bricket Wood Common. The Branch newsletter continues to be produced twice a year, and underwent a facelift in the cover design to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Society. We continue to encourage members to receive these electronically, as pdf files by e-mail, to save on the ever-increasing costs of stationary and postage. However, the proportion of members opting to receive them this way has remained stubbornly low, at only 12% of the membership. Fortunately, we continue to benefit from the good will of the Open University mail room, who process the mailings through their franking machines, resulting in meaningful savings relative to the cost of postage stamps.

Ian Small repeated his request that as many members as possible switch to electronic mailing to save on postage costs.

- *Question from the floor asked 'was there a reason that although members joined others left?'*
The Membership Secretary explained there was no simple answer, much was to do with the free membership offer where people join and then don't take up the second or third year. We need to make it as attractive as possible to stay. There was a new Welcome Pack and our New Members' Day is well attended.

7. Millhoppers Reserve Update 2018 – Paula Reid on behalf of the Millhoppers Wardens

The Millhoppers Reserve Report was made available to read in advance in the Annual Review 2018

In 2018 monthly work parties continued and some positive results were seen. There was an increase in the number of wild flowers such as Knapweed and Lady's Bedstraw and the first appearance (certainly since we took over) of Red Campion. Thanks to the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust the reserve also had Herdwick sheep grazing during the winter. Grazing is a more natural way of grassland habitat management and should mean that with continued grazing the content of wild flowers will continue to increase and the finer grasses will start to predominate.

Nationally, last year was generally good for white butterflies, and some of the smaller species such as the blues, although numbers of Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals were down. Millhopper's results mainly mirrored this, and we recorded a high number of Common Blues and Small Coppers this summer, while Tortoiseshell numbers declined. However, Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Small and Large Skippers did very well at Millhoppers this year, and the Brown Argus was recorded on the weekly transects for the first time.

In 2018 we noticed tadpoles in the stream, and they managed to reach the froglet stage before the water disappeared again. So now we have a population of amphibians on the reserve.

Last summer we saw Banded Demoiselles on the reserve for the first time, an Emperor dragonfly and the usual appearance of Southern Hawkers.

The winter saw the reserve populated for a few weeks by a mixed flock of over 200 Fieldfares and Redpolls who were feeding on the Hawthorn berries.

Unfortunately, some of the Black Poplars are not doing so well. Damage from the newly resident grey squirrels, and possibly also Glis glis (edible dormouse) activity, has been observed on the younger stems. Also, the lack of water generally in the reserve is having a detrimental effect on these magnificent trees.

There were no questions

8. Election of Chair & Vice-chair (vacant) and 9. Election of Branch Officers

Nigel Agar was standing down from the committee. Under the rules of the constitution it was necessary to re-elect the longest serving committee members. These were Roger Gibbons and Ian Small. Both had agreed to stand again for re-election. Malcolm Hull asked for members to propose and second all with one vote.

Proposed: Nigel Agar Seconded: Dee Cullen

All in favour

- Malcolm Hull had agreed to stand again as Branch Chair.

The Chair thanked Nigel Agar for his long service and his valuable contribution to branch affairs and presented him with a retirement gift.

9. Any other business

- It was requested that in future some of the notes and agenda be shown as power point presentation. This was considered a very sensible suggestion.

The meeting closed at 11:43