

**MINUTES
Oxford Ornithological Society Annual General Meeting**

13th May 2015, 19:45 – 20:20
Exeter Hall, Kidlington

The meeting was attended by 52 members and was chaired by Sir Clive Elliott.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ray Bellis, John Melling and Mr and Mrs Townsend.

2. President's opening remarks

Clive Elliott commented on the successful year enjoyed by the OOS.

3. Minutes of 2013 Annual General Meeting

The minutes were approved by Clive Elliott.

Proposer: George Candelin

Seconder: Janet Person

4. Matters arising

None.

5. Secretary's report

Barry Hudson presented the Secretary's report for 2014 - 2015. A full version of the report is appended. The membership recorded its thanks to Barry for his contribution as Secretary over a number of years.

6. Treasurer's report

Eric Dunford presented the Treasurer's report for 2014 - 2015. A full version of the report and accounts are appended.

The accounts were accepted unanimously by those present.

Proposer: Ian Lewington

Seconder: Chris Signal

Jon Uren was elected unanimously as independent examiner of the accounts for the Society.

7. Conservation Officer's report

Alan Larkman presented the Conservation Officer's report for 2014 - 2015. A full version of the report is appended.

8. Resignations and election of Committee members

There was one resignation from the Committee. Barry Hudson stood down as Secretary. Caroline Coleman was the only nominee to take over this post and was elected unanimously.

It was noted that Graham Lenton intends to resign as Speakers' Secretary to the OOS, although he has undertaken to see through the programme of talks for 2015 – 2016. However, a replacement is needed to start planning the next year's programme from September. Members were asked for nominations to be submitted. Clive Elliott observed that the excellent speakers procured by Graham have made a huge contribution to the success of the OOS in attracting and retaining members.

It was proposed that Barry Hudson remain on the Committee as a second Conservation Officer to work alongside Alan Larkman. This was supported unanimously by the members present.

There were no further resignations or nominations for the Committee for the coming year. The other current Committee members were elected unanimously.

9. Other matters for discussion (submitted in advance)

None.

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Chairman's closing address

Clive Elliott remarked that he feels fortunate to be President of a Society with many people making important contributions.

The AGM was declared closed.

**Secretary's Report 2014-2015
Presented by Barry Hudson**

As in previous years I start my report commenting on our meetings venue that due to circumstances beyond our control required a move to Exeter Hall. Fortunately our new venue has proved to be popular with our membership and with the exception of the sound system that continues to be rather hit and miss has been a success. Your Committee will be talking to the Exeter Hall executive to find ways to improve the sound system.

Our society is a charity and as such depends greatly on the time and effort of members giving their talented assistance freely. I therefore offer on behalf of myself and the society my heartfelt thanks to, firstly Ian Lewington for his monthly contribution in presenting us with the regular Bulletin and his editorship of the Annual Report with the 2011 and 2012 editions already in the offing. Ian has a great deal of help with the Annual Reports through a dedicated team of species writers who are listed prominently in the reports and also relies on Graham Coleman for keeping the team focused and Bob Pomphret for his design expertise. Rosemarie Lenton and Marie Therese Elliott have continued to make beverages and dish out biscuits in the tea break and we all thank them for their efforts. The posting out of bulletins by Janet Person is most gratefully recorded this being a rather tedious but important service to our members. Our Webmaster Ray Bellis has made good progress in making the OOS website more accessible to everyone not least those committee members who have a requirement to enter information on the site. BTO representative John Melling has had a difficult time this past year with health problems but has nevertheless worked tirelessly reminding members of surveys and visiting much of Oxfordshire when he has found gaps that need filling. Jon Uren is an important contributor to the OOS due to the work he undertakes as data base manager and society auditor. Keith Clack helps to keep the OOS in the public eye with his entertaining and informative literary contributions regularly printed in the Oxford Times. The Oxford Blog site overseen by Adam Hartley and Jason Pocock continues to be popular with Oxon birders. Graham Lenton as Speakers' Secretary once again presented us with some marvellous speakers on a wide range of mainly birding subjects and Steve Alley led field trips covering the county and occasionally further afield, once again a big thank you to all of you.

The Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture in association with The Ashmolean Natural History Society was this year given by the eminent and greatly respected Professor Ian Newton and attracted an audience approaching two hundred generating a profit for both societies.

Finally, as I indicated in last year's Secretary's Report I am standing down from this position in order to give more time to another committee position that I hope will benefit Oxfordshire's bird life. Fortunately I have received as secretary a written application from someone who is willing to take on the responsibilities of secretary. My thanks go to my committee for all the help and generous support I have received during my tenure and the many friends I have made within the membership from the interaction necessary for the success of my secretarial duties and I am particularly pleased to note that our membership numbers have held firm during a time when other societies have struggled to retain previous support.

Barry Hudson, OOS Secretary

**Treasurer's report 2014-2015
Presented by Eric Dunford**

General Fund Receipts Income increased by £650 this year, mainly due to several generous donations by members, but also higher visitor fees and increased membership. We now have 298 members (49 of whom are family members), which is a net increase of 11 on the year, reversing the decrease of the previous year.

General Fund Payments Expenditure this year was nominally less this year, but largely because just one Annual Report was produced. Use of Exeter Hall has increased costs significantly, while other costs are largely unchanged. After allowing for credits and debits (including provision for future Annual Reports), the balance in hand decreased by £775, leaving a £3,350 balance.

Conservation Special Fund This benefitted again from Oxford Times payments for monthly articles and generous donations from members. There was an overall surplus of £220 leaving a balance of £5,650.

2015-2016 Budget The Committee has agreed a Budget for 2015/6. With over £9,000 in hand the Committee felt that it should continue to absorb increased costs of meetings and bulletins for the current year without increasing Subscriptions for the coming year. It will continue with this policy as long as possible. The move to Exeter Hall and the excellence of recent speakers is having a positive effect on attendance and membership, which is helping to meet the rising costs.

Finally, many thanks to Jon Uren for carrying out the duties of Independent Examiner so cheerfully.

Eric Dunford, OOS Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Oxford Ornithological Society **Accounting Statement (Receipts & Payments Basis)**

Section A: General Fund

2014/2015

2013/2014

A1: Receipts

A1a: Gifts Donations and Voluntary receipts

Donations Members	332	
Donations Non Members	134	78
Donations Bernard Tucker Lecture	332	176
Subscriptions	4,596	4,484
Gift Aid	1,090	1,175
Refreshments Donations	244	186
Bernard Tucker Lecture Sponsorship	100	100

A1b: Receipts from Trading Activities

Annual Report Sales	63	38
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A1c: Receipts earned from Assets

Interest Barclays	135	133
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Total Receipts from Section A

7,026

6,370

<u>Oxford Ornithological Society</u>	<u>2014/2015</u>	<u>2013/2014</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<u>A2a: Payments</u>			
<u>A2: Payments directly for Charitable Purposes</u>			
Indoor Meetings Hall Hire	1,411	1,241	£317 from 12/13
Speakers Fees	635	703	
Annual Report	1,577	3,154	Two in 13/14
Programme Cards	127	152	
Envelopes and Labels for Bulletin	37	49	
Bulletin Production	1,315	1,298	
Postage for Bulletins and Annual Report	1,331	1,635	
Refreshments Costs	31	35	
Subscription to ONCF	15	15	
A2: Payments for publicity, fund raising, Management and admin			
Liability Insurance	113	113	
Bernard Tucker expenses	204	203	
ANHS share of BTL Surplus	89	37	
Website	57	57	
Total Payments for Section 2	6,943	8,692	
Total Income A1	7,026	6,370	
Net Receipts/(Payments) –A1- A2	83	-2,322	
A3: Cash Funds last year	8,923	11,245	
Cash Fund this year	9,006	8,923	

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Oxford Ornithological Society Accounting Statement (Receipts & Payments Basis)

Section B: Special Fund	2014/15	<i>2013/14</i>	Notes
<u>B1 Receipts:</u>			
<u>B1a: Gifts Donations and Voluntary Receipts</u>			
Oxford Times Articles	440	400	
TOE/ Smith Grants		2,300	
Donations to Tree Sparrow Project	1,445	150	
<u>B1b: Receipts from Trading Activities</u>			
Sale of Publications	2	23	
Total Receipts earned from Assets	1,886	2,873	
<u>B2 Payments</u>			
<u>B2a: Payments directly for Charitable purposes</u>			
Publications		265	
Tree Sparrow Project	889	2,164	
Barn Owl Project	500	500	
Hobby Project		200	
Total Payments	1,389	3,129	
Net Receipts/ (Payments)	497	-256	

**Conservation Report
Alan Larkman**

I will try to give a very quick overview of some of the Society's conservation activities over the past 12 months or so. I'm only going to talk about what might be called 'positive' or 'direct' conservation work, but that is not to belittle the very large amount of surveying, recording and ringing carried out by many of our members, which also contributes hugely to the conservation of birds and other groups. I would particularly like to take this opportunity to try to thank the people who have given so much to make our efforts possible – I'm bound to forget some, so let me make my apologies in advance to anyone in that position!

Our work largely revolves around owls and birds of prey on the one hand and farmland birds and other prey items on the other. This time last year, I had to report only mediocre news on breeding success on both these fronts. However, I'm delighted to be able to say this time that simply some decent weather during spring and early summer last year led to greatly improved breeding productivity and a much more cheerful picture. Turning to Barn Owls first, I hope you are all aware of the sterling work that Pat Wixey and his team have done over many years. Last year they monitored no fewer than 174 Barn Owl boxes, which is a Herculean task given their geographical spread. Pat tells me that the owls had a long and successful breeding season, and he estimates that at least 140 owlets fledged from their nest boxes, including two broods of six. As if they didn't have enough to do already, Pat and his team put up an additional 12 Barn Owl boxes last winter in response to requests from the public. Pat described the year as great but hectic, and he thanks Ian Anderson and Albert Allen for practical help, Sue Morrish for providing a rent-free workshop at High Cogges Farm, and the Society for its (modest) financial support.

Some members of the Society are also involved with protecting harriers in the county, and this is an area in which I think our Society might be able to do more in future.

Turning now to Tree Sparrows, I'm pleased to report that, like Barn Owls they also had a better breeding season last year, and Clive ringed a record number of 225 nestlings. One or two members have said to me that they don't fully understand the scope of the Tree Sparrow project, so I'll give a quick outline. We maintain a network of about 16 feeding sites, all in the western part of the county, where we provide food in the form of millet seeds in hanging feeders all year round. This is also something of a mammoth task – most sites are visited twice or even three times a week, every week in all weathers. Some can be reached, or nearly reached, by car, while others involve a substantial walk, and we provide several tonnes of millet each year. We have about 250 nest boxes, most of which are checked and some have their nestlings ringed. Because Tree Sparrows are social nesters, the boxes are clustered in groups, so there is less driving mileage needed than for an equivalent number of Barn Owl boxes. However, for successful ringing each box has to be visited several times, because the birds may have 2, 3 or even 4 broods per season, and the time window when each brood of nestlings is suitable for ringing is only short. I would particularly like to thank Clive Elliott, Barry Hudson, Sally Taylor, Albert Allen, Bill Haynes and Martin Corley who have maintained this considerable level of effort over a number of years.

Our winter ground-feeding programme was more straightforward this year, given the absence of the prolonged flooding that occurred at some sites last year. By providing a combination of rapeseed, linseed and millet on the ground we were successful in attracting and feeding several hundred Linnets and smaller numbers of Reed Buntings, Yellowhammers and Bullfinches. Feeding continued right through from December until early May, hopefully assisting the birds through the period of greatest food shortage for these species, often referred to as the 'hungry gap'. The costs of these feeding projects have mainly been met by donations from the members involved and others, but I am currently exploring a source of funding which I hope should be able to support the project at something equal or greater than its current level of activity for the next 5 years – fingers crossed!

Members of the Society, led by Clive Elliot, have been negotiating with the owners and managers of Dix Pit to try and improve conditions there for both birds and bird-watchers. It may be that we will be calling for help with some manual labour on the site in the coming autumn.

As in previous years, may I stress that the money we provide for these conservation projects does not come from members' subscriptions, but from a separate Conservation (or Fieldwork) Fund that is kept afloat by individual donations and by income from the regular articles contributed to the Oxford Times by Barry Hudson and Keith Clack. We are deeply grateful to them.

Last year I mentioned our work at City Farm near Eynsham, which is farmed using methods more typical of the 1950s than for 2015 and where we provide surveying, monitoring and advice, as well as trying to co-ordinate conservation activities. The farm is good for farmland birds and has become outstanding for its range of arable plants. Plantlife International operates a points scoring scheme for ranking arable farmland sites, on which the threshold for a site of national importance is 35 points and that for an internationally important site is 70 points. Last year I reported that City Farm had reached a total of 46 points, well above the threshold for national importance. I'm happy to say that this total has now reached 63 points, and so it is within a whisker of being designated as a site of international importance. It's clear that the importance of City Farm as a botanical site now exceeds its importance as a bird site, so it may not be appropriate to continue regarding it as a purely OOS project. It may be that we should consider involving another conservation charity in its future management.

Finally, it won't have escaped your notice that we have just had a General Election. I wouldn't presume to comment on the outcome, other than to say that the subsequent cabinet re-shuffle now means that neither Mr Paterson nor Mr Pickles should be involved with Defra or the Environment Agency for the foreseeable future – something that comes as a considerable relief, at least to me.

**Alan Larkman
Conservation Officer**