**Minutes of RNHS Annual General Meeting 2016**

**T**he Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 1st March 2016, at Voluntary Action Rutland, Lands End Way, Oakham, with 61 members present and Vice President Mr Philip Rudkin in the Chair.

**1 Apologies**

Gill Chiverton, Jenny Harris, Linda Worrall, Sheila Handy and John Tomlinson.

**2 Minutes of the previous AGM 2013**

As circulated in Fieldfare January 2016. No comments were received. The Minutes were approved and signed. Proposed Martin Grimes, seconded David Cotter.

**3 Honorary Treasurer’s Report and approval of accounts**

Margaret Conner circulated the Society’s accounts for year ending 31/12/2015, checked by George Kirk. Margaret commented “2015 was RNHS 50th Anniversary – so the Society held celebrations and relaunched itself, utilising reserves built up over the past few years.

Income for 2015 was £4,654, expenditure £9,024, giving an excess of expenditure in the year of £4,370.

We gained 30 new members, with 20 lost, so we had an increase in subscription income, reversing the trend of the last few years.

The major increase in ongoing expenses was Publication costs which increased due to the redeveloped Fieldfare. The overall increase in printing and distribution costs was offset as a number of members have chosen to receive it digitally.

There was a small deficit on regular income and expenses of £78, largely due to the new Fieldfare, but other costs have also increased by small amounts.

One-off Expenditure and income came from reserves for the 50th Anniversary celebrations and relaunch of the Society - the new website cost £1,920, which should serve the Society for the next few years, the celebrity lecture had a net cost of £1,807 (i.e. after ticket sales), plus we produced the publicity leaflets and attendance at the Rutland Show.

Reserves total £6,461, which is still close to two years ongoing expenditure. The Society is not in financial difficulty, but we do need to ensure that there are not ongoing deficits.

The forecast to 2016 shows that assuming no change in membership numbers, and similar costs to 2015 there could be a small deficit in 2016 with no contingency for one-off expenditure.”

Proposed by Roy Lemmon, seconded by Ann Tomlinson, the Report was adopted and Mrs Conner thanked.

**4 Re-appointment of Independent Examiner**

Proposed by Brian Nicholls, seconded by Rose Bakker. Mr George Kirk was re-appointed.

**5 Chairman’s Report**

“Our 50th anniversary year 2015 proved to be a very busy one for the RNHS. Special events and activities were planned, and the committee also “relaunched” the society. There had been concerns that we were losing members, and needed to update our image to appeal to a wider membership in the 21st century.

The first innovation to mark this special year was that Fieldfare went digital, and for the first time we were able to include colour photographs. I think that all members have approved and enjoyed the new look Fieldfare. The professional and attractive publication, for which we thank our editor Hendrina Ellis (assisted by husband Paul) is a great assetto the society. In some ways this success was a problem, because some members who had decided to forego their paper copy in favour of digital, found the new look Fieldfare so attractive that they changed their minds and continued to take the paper newsletter. Hendrina also edited the Annual Report, which was published later in the year, and is a superb record of society activities and observations. Hendrina has decided after 8 Years of doing this tremendous job for the society that while she will still continue as Fieldfare editor, she wishes to reduce her workload and retire from her position as editor of the Annual report. We thank her most sincerely for her patience, dedication and hard work, and most of all for her skill and professionalism in consistently producing such an excellent document. We are lucky in that Paul has volunteered to take over as the Annual Report editor.

In May we held a special celebration event at the Wilson Auditorium at Oakham School. Popular TV wildlife personality Mike Dilger gave us a highly entertaining evening on “The trials and tribulations of a Wildlife presenter” preceded by celebration drinks and nibbles. A total of 120 members and friends attended, and had a thoroughly happy occasion, thanks to the efforts of many members and committee.

Our usual programme of winter indoor meetings was well attended, a highlight in April was Phil Rudkin, assisted by Dave Needham, giving a talk on the first 50 years of the RNHS, attended by many of the long term members, including former secretary John Stapleton, and as a wander down memory lane was greatly enjoyed by all. Our AGM was a recorder’s evening and an opportunity to hear what our recorders had been finding out during the year. The autumn season began with an excellent talk by Vin Fleming on earthstars and brittlegills – or fungi- by a more romantic name, and was followed in October by a fungal foray in Clipsham Park Wood. Other outdoor meetings began in February with a visit to the hides at Egleton, and in May we had a lovely visit to Burley wood in the bluebells, with the added excitement of hearing a lesser spotted woodpecker. The visit to Whisby nature Park near Lincoln was less pleasant, the continual heavy rain spoiling what could have been a wonderful day, but the park is an interesting one, with many bird species present, so may well be worth a future trip.

Many of our recorders organised special workshops to celebrate 50 years of the RNHS, and these were hugely educational and enjoyable. Andy Lear of LRWT kindly led a botanical workshop – more accurately called a masterclass, at Greetham meadows, on a lovely day in June, and a wonderful array of wild flowers was seen and identifiable features expertly outlined. In July a meeting looking for butterflies at Ketton quarry was very well supported and successful and at Clipsham Quarry a moth trapping evening was held, the poor weather on the planned evening led to a day’s delay, so unfortunately numbers attending were disappointing, but a good evening’s collection of Moth species was recorded. The orthopteran and insect meeting was held in August also at Ketton Quarry, and as another innovation we hired the Ketton scout hall, so that we had facilities for an all day affair, and with an attendance of 40 members this was greatly appreciated. The water bird workshop at Fort Henry lakes in October and the bat workshop were also very well received. The society thanks all recorders for the work they do, and especially for their time and effort involved in planning these special events.

A new recorder joined the ranks in the middle of the year, David Roome taking on River recording, and has all ready contributed information on local rivers and their wildlife status.

At the end of the year Jean and Ron Harvey decided that after 25 years as recorders of first entomology, then Butterflies and moths, they would like to hand over the post. The Society is very grateful for all the recording carried out and passed on to national bodies, as well as the moth trapping events and butterfly visits that have been organised over these years. In 2011 the recording of butterflies was handed over to Alistair Lawrence, who has continued Jean and Ron’s work most effectively and has led several enjoyable butterfly outings, but now steps down from the position due to other commitments, and we thank him most sincerely for his work.

The programme of events was masterminded and details sorted by Programme Secretary Dawn Whitefield as she has done for 8 years. Dawn has now decided that she wishes to retire from this position, so we give heartfelt thanks for her hard work and attention to detail and for the interesting and varied programmes she has presented.

After 41/2 years as a very efficient treasurer Martin Grimes also decided to step down and handed over to Margaret Connor gradually over the year. We thank him for leaving the society accounts in such good order and Margaret for taking over this position alongside that of Membership secretary.

In 2015, for the first time in recent years the society manned a stand at Rutland County show, and this brought the society to the attention of the wider public. The strong winds on the weekend concerned made the event a little challenging, but as usual the team worked well together and overcame the difficulties for a successful day, and we hope to repeat this in 2016.

In committee we have been concerned over safety of members at our meetings, and have introduced a set of risk assessments and procedures to help avoid possible dangers when planning outdoor activities.

A small group of committee members worked very hard with Morton Carnie of Oakham to bring about a new website design and this went on-line in May. The new look website has been well received, giving us a more user friendly interface with an attractive appearance. It is possible to update and include latest news, and has links to social media to allow direct member input of comments and photos, as well as last minute changes to programme for example, so it is all ready proving it’s worth. We hope that members will find it useful and informative over the coming years.

Sadly at Christmas our former president (2001-2011) and active member Sir Clifford Boulton died, and we remember gratefully his interest and support for the society, and passed on our sympathy to his family.

In November, together with the LRWT, we launched another new venture. A group with the title “Wild Futures”, designed to be accessible to young people aged 18-30, was formed. Members will join the group at a relatively low rate, gaining joint membership of RNHS and LRWT. The aims of the group are to encourage interaction between young adults and knowledgeable members, with skills in wildlife identification and recording, to the advantage of all concerned, and hopefully the eventual benefit of conservation and the environment. We have all ready 12 extra members, and look forward to working with them in 2016.

2015 was an enjoyable one for committee, who have all worked together with amazing tolerance and commitment, for the benefit of RNHS members. We hope that the changes we have implemented will be seen as a valuable contribution to the success of the society.”

Julie Comber proposed and David Needham seconded that the Chairman’s Report be adopted.

**6a Election of officers**

The following officers, Proposed by Alistair Lawrence and Seconded by Christine Spark, were elected en bloc:

*President*: Mr J Hanbury
*Chairman*: Mrs Linda Biddle *Honorary Secretary*: Mr Roy Edwards
*Honorary Treasurer*: Mrs Margaret Conner *Membership Secretary:* Mrs Margaret Conner, *Programme Secretary*: position vacant *Fieldfare Editor*: Mrs Hendrina Ellis.

**6b Election of committee**

The following committee members, Proposed by John Ansley and Seconded by John Rodgers, were elected en bloc:

Mrs Gill Chiverton, Mrs Jenny Harris, Mr Peter Scott, Ms Jenny Rivett, Mr David Cotter, Mrs Dawn Whitefield and Mr Derick Hill

**7. Discussion of future finance options**

Following the Treasurers report - “there could be a small deficit in 2016 with no contingency for one-off expenditure.”

Options discussed:

1. Continue with a deficit each year
2. Increase subscriptions
3. Place the Annual Report online and charge for paper copies

The members dismissed item a.

Discussion on c. varied form putting the Annual Report entirely online, to charging around £4 a paper copy for those that requested one to cover copy and postage.

Finally a suggestion was made by Ann Tomlinson “costs will go up, so we will need to put up subs even if we trim Annual Report costs, I suggest we raise the subs to £12” The meeting voted in favour with a substantial majority.

These recommendations will be discussed and finalised in committee.

**8. Any other business**

There was no AOB.

**9 Date of next AGM**

Tuesday 7th March 2017.

(signed)………………………………………………..Chairman on ……………………