

Minutes of BC Lancashire Branch AGM: 7th October 2018

Ainsdale NNR

Present:

Committee: Chris Winnick (CW), Chris Atherton (CA), Jane Jones (JJ), Gemma McMullan (GM), Dave Wrigley (DW), Laura Sivell (LS)

Members: Natalie Hunt, Ron Moyes, Chris Ambrose, Brian Hancock, Phil Smith, Chris Green, Bob Pyefinch, Gavin Ashworth, Barry Dyson, Mike Selway, Danielle Rowlands, Lois Hughes, Jeff Brown, Sue Brown, Sheila Whatley, Andrew Jones, Archie Simpson, Sonia Allen.

Apologies:

Tom Dunbar (TD)

Minutes of Last AGM (8th July 2017):

Read and accepted save for the absence of inclusion of the details of the Countryside Stewardship Agreement relating to Myers Allotment. They are attached to these minutes.

Minutes proposed for approval by Dave Wrigley and seconded by Archie Simpson.

Chairman's Report:

I start with mixed feelings.....sad that this is my last members' day as Chairman of Lancashire BC but excited that we have come through a difficult period and that the branch has a very exciting future. So please forgive my report as being more personal and reflective than before.

My love of Lancashire butterflies started before I moved to Kendal at the end of 2010. On our many house hunting trips we would always stop off at Warton Crag....what a wonderful place! I still remember meeting the then Chair of Lancashire BC Martin Elsworth on Warton Crag and being told "it is easy recording HBF....as up here almost all large fritillaries are HBF!" We twice tried to buy a house in Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB and would always stay at a B&B next to Gait Barrow NNR. At that time Gait Barrow was still 'alive' with fritillaries and on one visit in May I first met Laura releasing DofB as part of a release scheme. My first ever work party was at Holgates Caravan Park where I met Martin Wain...(trying to save a small population of DofB) and my first regular work parties were on Gait Barrow and on the newly opened BC reserve Myers Allotment. At this time I took on the Beetham Fell transect (it had just lost its DofB the year before) and visited Yealand Hall Allotment because Brian Hancock and Dave Wrigley told me it was such a great place to see all the violet-feeding fritillaries....and they were right.

This all happened before I joined the Cumbria BC committee....and loving the Morecambe Bay area and its wonderful butterflies the border between Lancashire and Cumbria has always seemed of little relevance. So when I heard that several "stalwart" Lancashire committee members had stood down (or were planning to do so) leaving the branch with no chairman, secretary, membership secretary, branch organiser or treasurer, I offered to come to committee meetings for the next 18 months to show support. Ralph Assheton became chair for one year and then Dave Wrigley helped

as acting chair while both the branch and Head Office tried to recruit new committee members and in particular a new chair. Secretary and membership posts were filled....but only for one meeting!....before Alex Parsons offered to become membership secretary. With no further success and with the closure of the branch a real possibility, HO suggested that North Lancashire should join Cumbria, and South Lancashire should amalgamate with Cheshire. Laura hosted an emergency meeting with all three branches represented....the upshot being that Lancashire Branch should remain intact with Malcolm Plant (Cheshire Chair) and myself as joint acting Chair/Branch Organisers until new committee members could be recruited. Alex Parsons offered to add moth officer and (later) web-master to his responsibilities and Tom Dunbar kindly agreed to attend committee meetings (as well as be a committee member of Cumbria Branch). Barry Dyson (long-term treasurer) retired but HO now cover this. Martin Elsworth and Derek Smith (two tremendous branch stalwarts) also retired and we have also seen the departure of Anne Smith and Michael Bloomfield from attending committee meetings.

Perhaps I was enjoying the post too much....but one year became four years so it was time to announce my intention to stand down (reported in the last two Newsletters). During this period Zoe Foster, Dave Coleman, Chris Anderton, Gemma McMullan, and Jane Jones have all joined the Lancashire BC committee giving tremendous service and with the continued hard work and support of Dave Wrigley, (Reserves Officer), Laura Sivell (Newsletter Editor and County Butterfly Recorder), Tom Dunbar (Field-trip Co-ordinator) and Martin Wain (BC Officer for the NW), the future of the branch is in excellent hands. With Alex's departure to Somerset, Jane has become Moth Officer and Membership Secretary as well as Secretary and Gemma is Web-master and Social Media Officer. To find out more about the early years of the branch read Laura's excellent article in the Autumn 2018 newsletter.

So to the highlights of 2017/2018....

- Membership is still rising strongly – but we could still do with more ‘active volunteers’!
- Our finances are in good shape
- Myers Allotment just keeps on get better!
- Through the hard work of Tom Dunbar we have a more varied and geographically widespread programme of field-trips and egg and arboreal butterfly trips and searches.
- Our newsletters are better than ever with the last full-colour issue gaining widespread acclaim....and ‘thank-you’ to all who receive this electronically.
- Regarding butterflies it has been a ‘mixed picture’. Some species have had strong flight seasons during the heatwave while others (notably the HBF) have had a very poor year. It is too soon to say whether this year's extreme weather will have a longer lasting impact. However, the sightings facility has been fantastic (Thank you Mark Eastlick) and if you keep sending in those sightings and the other data you send Laura, she will be able to assess these changes in her now bi-annual report (due 2019)

Finally, thank you all for making my role so enjoyable and rewarding....and thank you for allowing me to confidently predict a great future for the Lancashire branch of BC.

Financial Report:

CW reported that the Branch account is very healthy with a balance of just short of £9000. As Membership is so healthy, the Branch received £4500.00 in subscriptions in May. The Branch has also been selling through the Pug Moths of the NW book by Brian Hancock, bringing revenue in. The Committee will look at possibly returning some funds to Head Office via the Matchpot return scheme, trying to ensure the use of the funds back in the NW area if at all possible.

Moth Report:

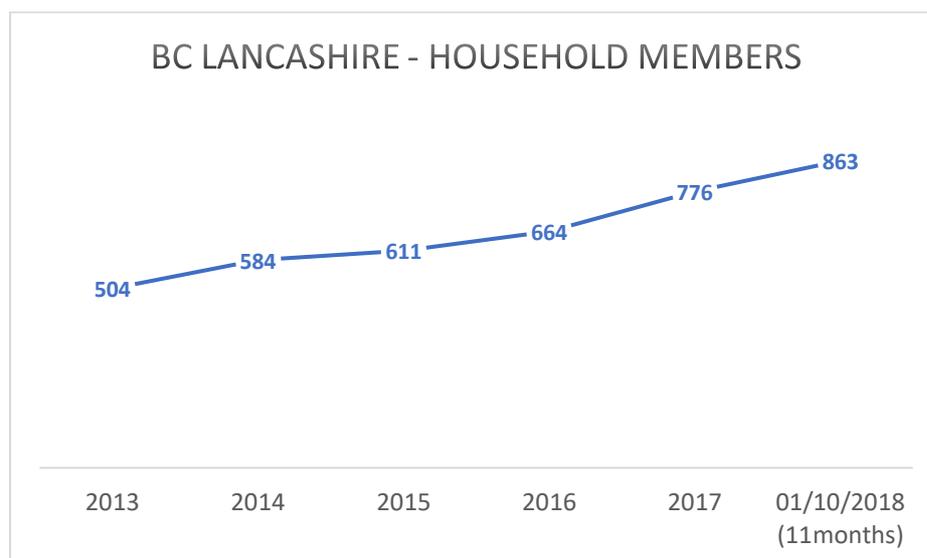
JJ reported that the Atlas of Britain & Ireland's Larger Moths is now available to pre-order with a £10 saving on the published price via www.naturebureau.co.uk.

The 100 copies of Brian Hancock's book on Pug Moths of the North-West that we bought to sell through the Branch were selling well through the Spring and Summer, but the sales have now tailed off. To date 59 books have been sold.

Membership Report:

JJ reported as of 1st October 2018, the branch had a total of 863 Member households with a total of 1224 individual Branch Members. This is an increase of 87 households and an increase of 165 individual members on 1st November 2017 (when BC put out their annual membership report).

As of this year, the calculation has been simplified for the payment to branches from Head Office and the Branch now receives £6.00 for each member (apart from Life Members for whom the Branch receives no payment), removing the complicated calculation that took into account new members joining free for their first year.



Butterfly Report:

LS stated that no Butterfly Report had been prepared for 2018 but that there would be one in Spring of 2019, reporting on 2 years of data. Laura talked about the different ways to report sightings and that all were fine but reiterated the importance of making sure records are not duplicated. If you have not yet sent records in, please do so ASAP.

Reserves Report:

DW reported that a detailed update regarding the Myers Allotment Reserve was provided on 29th July 2018 and published in the autumn newsletter.

Notable developments since that time are as follows:-

Volunteer Work Parties

The annual programme of autumn/winter work parties commenced on Tuesday, 25th September (one week late, due to adverse weather conditions). Four work parties have so far been held, with a total of 103 hours worked. Both Tuesday sessions were reasonably well attended, with 6 and 8 people respectively, but the Thursday sessions were very poorly attended, with only myself and one other person present. Unless things improve, we will be hard pushed to complete all the work scheduled for this winter, so, if you can help, do please get in touch!! DW can be contacted by telephone, on 01524 805527 or email reserves@lancashire-butterflies.org.uk.

Countryside Stewardship Agreement

Full details were given at the last Open Day/AGM held at RSPB Leighton Moss on 8th July 2017.

As mentioned in the 29th July update, we are well on course for completing the 1ha of tree and scrub clearance required to be completed by the end of December this year.

Due to the extent of work required to be completed by the end of December, a decision was made to bring in contractors to carry out part of this work and a contract has now been awarded to local contractor, David Wain, to clear cotoneaster, bramble and small trees on one particularly heavily overgrown section. This contract is for 7 man days work at a rate of £140 per day, total cost £980. It is expected that HO will settle this contract, until such time as payments come through from the Rural Payments Agency, thereby avoiding the necessity of depleting Branch funds.

As far as I am aware, the Rural Payments Agency and Natural England are still involved in discussions regarding the outcomes of inspections carried out last autumn and no payments are likely to be made until such time as these discussions have been finalised.

As far as the cattle grazing is concerned, a meeting was held on site with the grazier, Bill Grayson, his colleague Sally and Lucy Morton, Reserves Officer from HO, on Tuesday, 25th September, the purpose being to assess the outcomes of grazing so far and to see if any changes need to be made to the current grazing regime. Following detailed discussions and

a walk round site, it was felt that having 3 cattle on for longer would be more beneficial than having 4 cattle on for a shorter period of time. It was therefore agreed that grazing by 3 cattle would commence on 1st August through to December next year. As far as this year is concerned, 3 cattle were introduced on Wednesday, 19th September and will remain on site until December.

Website Report:

GMc reported that the newly designed Butterfly Conservation website was launched in July 2018 - the website address remains the same: www.butterfly-conservation.org The new website features an improved layout and is easier to update.

The direct link to the Lancashire branch section of the Butterfly Conservation website is: www.butterfly-conservation.org/in-your-area/lancashire-branch

Details of our upcoming events are posted on the website. You can also submit butterfly and moth sightings. So far in 2018, 2742 butterfly and moth sightings have been submitted online - thanks to all those who have contributed.

Gemma McMullan has taken over the role of webmaster from Alex Parsons. Please email any website queries or updates to webmaster@lancashire-butterflies.org.uk

Twitter Report:

The Lancashire branch Twitter account can be viewed at: www.twitter.com/BC_Lancs



Even if you're not a Twitter member you can still look at the Twitter page. The Twitter feed is also displayed on the Lancashire branch section of the Butterfly Conservation website.

The Twitter account is mainly used for sharing local butterfly sightings and photos along with branch and head office news.

Any butterfly and moth sightings submitted to the Lancashire branch website sightings page with a photo and the 'social media' box ticked will automatically be posted to the branch Twitter account.

Gemma McMullan now looks after the Twitter account. Since April this year followers have increased by over 100, with the current number standing at 905.

Election of Officers:

CW announced that he would not be seeking re-election as Chair.

All other officers were re-elected (Proposed Ron Moyes, seconded Barry Dyson)

AOB:

It was suggested that the minutes should be posted on the website.

It was suggested that reminders should be put out on Twitter regularly for the Myers Allotment work parties

A member asked if it would be possible for those choosing to receive a paper-copy of the Newsletter rather than an eNewsletter, to make a nominal payment towards printing and postage. It was discussed, and the committee will look into this, although it was difficult to see how this could be administered.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed.