

Berwickshire Naturalists' Club AGM MINUTES

14th October 2021 2pm

Parish Room, Holy Trinity Church, Berwick upon Tweed

Present: Elizabeth Devon, M. Devon, Lesley Gray, Lida Hatrick, Ann Henderson, Philomena Johnston, Gareth Lewis, Peter Macdonald, Roger Manning, John Home Robertson, Philip Rowett, Sue Neville Taylor, Chris Neville Taylor, Liz Towner, John Towner

Apologies: Bill Black, Richard Blake, Jay Bosanquet, Julia Rosemary Carter, Charles Cook, Trixie Collin, Jennifer Croall, Anne Dall, John and Anne Dent, Peter Gray, Colum and Viv Giles, Meg Hardie, Janet and David Heywood, Alison and Bill Landale, David Long, Iain and Irene Martine, Sheena Martinez, Anne Miller, Alison Petrie, Katharine Prentice, Alison Reed, Catherine Home Robertson, Sue Shaw, Janet Shearer, Henrietta Simpson, Frank Spratt, John Steele, Ben Tindall, Shelagh Townsend, Alexander Trotter, Ray Turnbull, Douglas Wight

1. Welcome from the President (Lesley Gray)

Lesley summarised the activities of the Club over the last two years, thanking the Council members for the work carried out during the restrictions imposed by the COVID19 pandemic, and noted the success of the move to online meetings and talks. This had necessitated an update of the BNC Rules, which would be tabled later in the meeting. The AGM scheduled for 2020 had not been able to take place. Thanks were recorded to Liz Cameron for her work as Membership Secretary until late 2020, and it was noted that Ann Henderson had taken on that role. Plans are in hand for a joint two day conference July 2022 with Ben Tindall pulling it together, with the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland and Scotland's Garden and Landscape Heritage. The President also noted that 2031 would be the Club's Bicentenary year, and the Council has ring-fenced £5,000 towards the Bicentenary.

2. Attendance: Liz Cameron, Jim Cameron, Elizabeth and Martin Devon, Lesley Gray, Lida Hatrick, Ann Henderson, Philomena Johnston, Gareth Lewis, Peter Macdonald, Roger Manning, John Home Robertson, Phil Rowett, Chris Neville Taylor, Sue Neville Taylor, Liz Towner, John Towner

Apologies: Bill Black, Richard Blake, Jay Bosanquet, Julia Rosemary Carter, Charles Cook, Trixie Collin, Jennifer Croall, Anne Dall, John and Anne Dent, Colum and Viv Giles, Peter Gray, Meg Hardie, Janet and David Heywood, Alison and Bill Landale, David Long, Iain and Irene Martine, Sheena Martinez, Anne Miller, Alison Petrie, Katharine Prentice, Alison

Reed, Catherine Home Robertson, Sue Shaw, Janet Shearer, Henrietta Simpson, Frank Spratt, John Steele, Ben Tindall, Shelagh Townsend, Alexander Trotter, Ray Turnbull, Douglas Wight

3. Minutes of the 2019 AGM

The Minutes were moved as a correct record by Liz Cameron and seconded by Roger Manning, and agreed by members present.

4. Secretary's Report, including Membership (Ann Henderson)

In 2020 we recorded with regret the deaths of the following members:

Mr Barbour Smith, Rev Higham, Mr Goldsack, Mrs Janes, Priscilla Atkinson

Membership has remained at the same level as in 2019, although a few members have left, and new members joined.

Total membership 284

267 Ordinary Members

10 Life Members

2 Honorary Members

5 Associate Members

With regard to correspondence, the Secretary reported that most had related to membership, and the more frequent newsletter updates to all members, both hard copy and by email. The Secretary had contributed a short piece on the Merse Rhymes of Dr George Henderson, to the Whiteadder 2020 Festival, which had to move online due to the COVID restrictions.

5. Field Secretary's Report (Chris Neville Taylor)

In 2021 we conducted five field trips of botanical, geological or mycological interest, one perambulation, and visit to a splendid garden. We continued the 2020 monthly Zoom talks until June when it became possible to organise outdoor activities again.

The talks, most of which are available to view on our YouTube channel, covered a wide variety of subjects and took us from the Berwickshire Coast to the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. Thanks were recorded to those members who had contributed to the talks programme. The outdoor field trips commenced again with a visit to Hethpool on 26th May. Roger Manning led members on a walk which was, as ever, quite fascinating. The subsequent outing was a 14th July visit to Siccar Point by boat from Eyemouth. Alison Tymon and Ian Kille were our guides. In the afternoon Simon Furness invited us to visit the magnificent elliptical garden at Netherbyres.

On 26th August, Park Ranger Richard English led a Fossil Walk at Whitesands Bay, East Lothian. That afternoon, Pauline Smeed and Gordon Easingwood from the Dunbar and District History Society escorted us around some of the historic sites in Dunbar, ending up at the Town's Museum.

This year's Fungus Foray took place in Gifford Community Woodland on 16th September and Neville Kilkenny was our guide.

And prior to the AGM, Phil Rowett had been the guide on a perambulation in Tweedmouth.

Members recorded thanks to Chris Neville Taylor for all the work undertaken in the Field Secretary role.

6. Editing Secretary's Report (Peter MacDonald)

Peter reported that 2021 has been a busy publishing year for the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club. This year had seen the production of an illustrated book about Margaret Dickinson. Liz Towner was to be congratulated on this work.

A book on the mediaeval grave slabs of our area is to be published by the end of the year. There is also another work in preparation, which may also be ready before this time next year.

The latest issue of the History had now been sent out to members.

7. Treasurer's Report (Douglas Wight)

Douglas was unable to attend the meeting but passed on this report:

The financial position of the Club is largely unchanged over the past year. By and large, our main revenue stream, subscriptions, has been covering fixed costs, the largest of which is the publication of the History. In the financial year to December 31st, 2020 there was a small surplus of £184 and a bank balance at year end of £11,364.

The Club's healthy bank balance gives us the opportunity to "ring fence" some funds to be used towards the bicentenary celebrations in ten years' time. Council members agreed that a figure of £5,000 would be appropriate, which still allows us to maintain a comfortable cash surplus.

It was noted that both the Treasurer and the current auditor were standing down this year. Both had been thanked for their contributions.

8. Librarian's Report (Philip Rowett)

Phil reported that there had been little opportunity to be in the Library in the past year, due to ongoing COVID19 restrictions. Assistance had been provided to Liz Towner in the final research for her book, and a number of email have been dealt with from local historians/archaeologists as to whether we can find reference books that they require.

Contents of the Library will be reviewed in early 2022 to make better use of the space available. Members with relevant books that they might be interested in donating are to be encouraged to contact the Librarian.

In the coming months there will be further consultation and engagement with regard to the repurposing of parts of the Barracks, including the Clock Block. In response to a question from John Home Robertson, the President Lesley Gray confirmed that she had also been in discussion with Museums Northumberland and an assurance has been given that the BNC Library will be secure. Museums Northumberland is undertaking a separate search for an alternative location.

9. Election of Office Bearers and Council members for 2021- 2022

President – Chris Neville Taylor

Vice President – Richard Blake

Past President – Lesley Gray

Secretary (membership and correspondence) - Ann Henderson

Treasurer – Gareth Lewis

Editing Secretary – Peter MacDonald

Librarian – Phil Rowett

Field Secretary: A Sub Committee to be formed of previous Past Presidents (Roger Manning, John Dent, Jay Bosanquet, Lesley Gray)

Council Members - Henrietta Simpson, Lida Hatrick, Liz Towner

Douglas Wight, John Dent and Alison Tynam stepped down from Council and both were thanked for their contributions. Gareth Lewis accepted nomination as the Treasurer.

The AGM agreed all the above posts and new Council members.

10. Appointment of Independent Examiner

There is a vacancy and the Council will ensure this is filled.

Any Other Business previously notified – BNC Rules Revisions.

Lesley introduced the Rules with the proposed amendments. Council had given these thorough consideration over recent months. A number of the changes were proposed on advice from OSCR, to allow for the business to be conducted online when necessary. All changes to the Rules were endorsed by all present at the AGM.

A subsequent discussion ensued with regard to the origins of the ‘Rule First and Last’ – a quotation which is printed at the end of the BNC Rules. Philomena was thanked for her explanation of its origins, and Lesley

outlined her thoughts on possibly changing the quotation. After discussion, it was agreed that this would be passed to Council for decision, with both quotations having merit.

Nomination of the Vice President for 2021-2022

Richard Blake was nominated as Vice President for the coming year and agreed.

10. Installation of President for 2021-2022

Chris Neville Taylor was installed as the President for the coming year.

Note that the **Presidential address for 2020** was delivered by Lesley Gray on Zoom, and is contained within the latest issue of The History.

Meeting closed at 14.40

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