

SANDWICH BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR 2015 HELD AT THE FIELD CENTRE

ON SUNDAY JUNE 5TH 2016 AT 2.00 P.M

1. **Members present:** Patrick Old; Mike Briggs; Lesley Lovelady; Mike Sykes; Stephen Fuller; Sally Hunter; Sue Philpott; Robert Philpott; Henry Williams; Karen Bartlett; Ken Chapman; Susan Bennett; John Hollyer; Nigel Hefford; Kay Lunn; Vanessa Dent; R. Thomson; Bob Dean; Andrew Lipczynski; Rosemary Lipczynski; Vida Madell; Jane Relton; Roger Jones; Lisbet Pascal; John Websper; Rebecca Johnson; Sarah Fawcett; Shelia Seed; June Jolly; Mary Rudge; Alastair Henderson. (31)
2. **Apologies for absence:** Keith Ellis; Nick Smith; Brian Baltera; Liz Baltera; Nick Douet; Margaret Douet; Janet May; Nigel May; Andy Keen; Sue Morton; Dave Morton; Duncan McLean; Ellie McLean; Mr and Mrs. Martin (15)
3. **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for 2014, held on May 31st 2015.**

(A copy of these minutes had been filed in the folder available to members at the back of the main meeting hall at the Field Centre):

These minutes were taken as read and approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Any matters arising from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on May 31st 2015:**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Chairman's Report for 2015:**

Reported verbatim:

"This is my third Chair's report and I must first welcome all new members and thank existing members who renewed their subscription in 2015. I thank all officers and trustees for their work throughout the year on Council and various sub-committees. Mike Briggs (Vice-chair), Keith Ellis (Treasurer) and Ken Chapman (Secretary) continue to provide sterling service to the Trust, as do all trustees; Karen Bartlett, Vanessa Dent, Becky Johnson, Sara Fawcett, John Buckingham, Peter Dean, Nigel Hefford, Eugene Hood and Andy Keen. We welcomed five new trustees to Council in 2015; Sue Bennett, Sally Hunter, Alastair Henderson, Ian Hunter and Nick Smith, all of whom made significant contributions throughout the year, as did our Warden and Council co-optee Ian Hodgson. Thanks also

go to Roger Jones for facilitating continuing Development Plan discussions. It has been both a pleasure and privilege to chair a team comprised of such positive and energetic individuals.

First, on finances, Keith reports we again ended the year with a small, (£4,888), net trading surplus, the fifth consecutive. We continue to both retain and attract new members to the Bay with membership now standing at 590 (522 in 2014). Income from the clubs, trips, holidays (to Bulgaria and the Scillies), Wildlife & Countryside Fair, Wine and Wisdom and other social events, the shop, Gift Aid tax refund, the Open Day and raffle, survey work (for Natural England), the two agri-environmental schemes (Basic Payment and Environmental Stewardship) plus donations all held up. Income from hostel accommodation while still significant was reduced relative to two previous 'bumper' years. Thanks again go to Margaret, Janice, Leslie, Sue and Ian for their hard work and long hours managing the accommodation and for making guests feel welcomed. Our first year of 'green' electricity generation from the solar panel array has proved to be a valuable new source of income and represents an excellent return on our capital investment. Overall expenditure was at a similar level to last year with general increases due to servicing an increased membership including the cost of newsletters printed by a third party. While on the subject of servicing our membership, many thanks go to Becky for maintaining and developing our Facebook entry, which now has over 700 followers, and to Karen, Ian and John Buckingham for producing our monthly BayBites newsletter. You may also have noticed our very smart new information board at the entry to the car-park, designed and erected by Ken and funded by the Chapman (no relation) Foundation.

This year I want to make special mention of all those involved in our vital ringing and wildlife census work with grateful thanks to all our ringers and their trainees, birders and all who submitted ad hoc wildlife sightings throughout the year. A particular highlight was the BTO's South-East Ringer's Conference we hosted at the field centre in November. There was an excellent series of presentations including our own Hannah Lilley who gave a very well-received young birders perspective. It was great to see so many enthusiastic and knowledgeable folk filling the building and special thanks go to Ian and Sally Hunter who organised the event and to all volunteers who helped on the day. Based on positive feedback from attendees, this could become a regular event.

Special thanks also go to all who helped Ian on the daily census of the Estate, with regular forays across the greater recording area and with the Wetland Bird (WeBS) and Thanet Coastal Turnstone Surveys. This winter our work was helped enormously by Steffan Walton, a very able voluntary Assistant Warden. Steffan is Assistant Warden at Bardsey Bird Observatory which closes down over the winter. Steve Stansfield, the warden and 'SBBO old-boy' mentioned Steffan was looking for a placement and we were only too happy to oblige. Based on this success, I urge Council to consider how best we can attract and fund more Assistant Warden placements in the future. I would also like to thank especially Neil Davies (our man on Worth) and Martin Sutherland for their records and a huge 'thanks mate' goes out to Phil Milton whose work recording the birds of Pegwell Bay throughout the year tends to get overlooked by some but is absolutely invaluable.

Last year after we hosted the Bird Observatories Council AGM I mentioned I was impressed

by the quality of information being generated by BirdTrack and was very envious of those Observatories that had made enormous effort to digitise and get their historical bird records on-line and how this should be a priority for SBBO. This year I am very pleased to report that Karen and Ian have developed a new database (based on Recorder 6) for our bird records replacing the customised MS.Excel system used since 2006/7. Ian and Karen have already made huge strides in converting data and uploading records to the BTO and BirdTrack. With help from Alastair, Ken and Sue Bennett we have also started the absolutely Herculean task of digitising our huge legacy of historical paper records stretching back to the early 1960's. While I take no credit at all for these initiatives, I am immensely proud that this has been achieved under my 'tenure' and we can at long last better contribute our historical records collected over many years to national and international databases.

Ian continued his rigorous weekly Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) transects throughout the spring and summer moths for the ninth consecutive year, with Mike Syke's regularly censusing the butterflies on New Downs, while Ian Hunter took up the 'moth-ing' mantle passed on by dear departed John Beugg, with trapping throughout the year, as conditions permitted. We are again grateful for support from Francis Solly and for his regular 'moth nights' pulling in the crowds. During the summer, Karen, Ian and Sally took over the reins of moth-recording for the East Kent vice-county and with David Shenton have now set up the Kent Moth Group to record moths for the whole of Kent and for onward submission to the national database. On the general subject of insects, a personal highlight for me and many others was Dr Nikki Gammans from Bumblebee Conservation who led two well-attended bumblebee-identification workshops and several bee-walks during the summer. We now better appreciate that Sandwich Bay is a very important area for a number of nationally-scarce and rare bumblebees, including several Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species.

Of course much of this is dependent upon the state of the reserves we own, lease and manage. Our Conservation and Reserves Management Team led by Bill, Claire and Peter with excellent support from Christine, Sarah, Poppy, Alastair, Martin, Les, Nicholas, Eddie, John, Tony, Glen and Ken have had another very productive year. Working on both Monday and Thursday mornings, the team followed an extensive plan of work, agreed at the end of the summer, with a now well-versed program of 'routine' management work done on Restharrow Scrape and Dunes, the Elms, the three Gullies, Whitehouse Paddock and Middle Field reserves. The major project for 2015/6 was the complete clearance of the old board-work and re-fencing of The Haven. The loan of a tractor-towed mower/collector helped enormously, as did morning coffee with an endless supply of Claire's cookies and flapjack. The ringers were again hard at work in the Whitehouse Copse and in repairing further sections of the board-walk in the Heligoland Trap. Kay, Christine and Martin continued their efforts in the garden and maintenance of the new meadow behind the Field Centre. Indeed Kay was a very worthy and popular winner of the Tim Garland award for all her work.

It is always great to see the Field Centre being used for many social and educational activities, some of which I have already mentioned. Our monthly Wildlife Explorers and Phoenix clubs, run by the two Margarets, Leslie, Peter, Patrick and Duncan, and in

conjunction with the RSPB, continues to thrive and again we hosted a number of visits from students at Greenwich University on the MSc Environmental Sciences and GIS courses. Within the Field Centre, immense thanks go to Margaret and Nicholas Douet, who with help from a few stalwarts, in particular Alan Ashdown and Andy Keen, completed the redecoration and re-carpeting of the flat and all rooms in the accommodation area. Thanks also go to Sue, Leslie and a team of volunteers who redecorated the shop area. While the inside of the Field Centre now looks relatively spick and span, in the coming year we will need to turn its attention to the outside of the building, in particular the watch-tower, gable-ends and perimeter path, all of which are in various states of disrepair.

The report provides full details of all wildlife sightings throughout the year, however my position provides me the opportunity to share some of my personal highlights. It was probably the best Autumn I have witnessed at the Bay since I first started coming down in the late 80's. Record numbers of Siskin and Firecrest plus Long-eared Owl, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Yellow-browed and Pallas Warblers, Grey Grey Shrikes, and of course the Pallid Harrier and Red-flanked Bluetail capped by an amazing sea-watch on November 21st with its Little Auks and Shearwaters will live long in the memory. It almost makes all those long hours and committee meetings so worthwhile. I was proud to represent SBBO at the Bird Observatories Council at Portland in February, and with Ian Hunter, at a meeting of the Strait of Dover Project at Le Wast, Nord Pas de Calais, France.

There is always so much to say after a year but I will close once again by thanking all volunteers that tended the shop and welcomed visitors throughout the year, especially Sue, Eddie, Brian & Liz, Martin & Ann, Mike, Richard, Ian, Pat, Jane, Carol, Annette and Penny, with humble apologies for anyone I have overlooked. Finally I thank my long suffering wife, Rosie, and the partners and spouses of all trustees and volunteers, without whose support we would not be here.

It remains for me to formally thank our President Bill Oddie, our Vice-Presidents Mike Sykes and John Websper and our patrons Justin de Villeneuve and Sue Timney. A special note of thanks goes to Joan Frenken who stepped down as Patron in 2015. We thank Julian Sampson (GWFin) and Liz Spanton (NFU) for their continued support and advice. We thank our friends and owners of the reserves upon which we operate, especially Richard, Liz and Nigel Daw, Sue the shepherdess, David and Julia Hunter for their continued support and generosity, Tim and Edward Hulme, Tim Checketts, Secretary of the Royal St Georges GC, Linda Bayman, Michelle Parnell and all our neighbours at Sandwich Bay, Alan and Dave on the toll gate, the Royal Cinque Ports and Prince's Golf Courses, Phil Williams at Natural England, Martin Randall, Dan Snowdon and Craig Edwards at the RSPB whose continued work on the new Lydden Valley reserve on Worth marshes holds great promise for the future.

Finally, and I do mean finally, a couple of years ago Rosie and I had the privilege of going on a butterfly holiday in Provence with Tristan Lafrancis, author of *Butterflies of Europe*. At the end of the week, Tristan gave the group an old Greek salutation that I will pass on to you. I wish you another thousand years of butterflies, birds and dragonflies"

6. Secretary's Report for 2015:

Reported verbatim:

"Needless to say, Andrew's Chairman's Report has covered in comprehensive detail just about all of the key issues that affected the Observatory in 2015 and for this I am grateful, because it means that my Secretary's report can be mercifully shorter!

However, there are a few things which Andrew has left for me and which I would like to draw Members' attention to.

1. **Council meetings:** I'd like to support Andrew's comments regarding Council members. The Observatory's Council meets every month for several hours on your behalf, to plan for all of the activities that the Observatory is involved in. The amount of work done in these meetings, and then outside it as follow-up by individual Council members, or in sub-committees, is always very impressive and, without exception, these meetings have always been productive and positive experiences.
2. **Membership Secretary:** I'd like to record my personal thanks to Karen for carrying on the role as Membership Secretary – vitally important to the very existence of the Observatory. If she hadn't volunteered to carry on with this work when I became Secretary a couple of years ago, then I expect it would have been down to me to do it – so I'm grateful!
3. **Observatory Library and Archive Room:** A lot of time has been spent over the last year in continuing the task of sorting out the Observatory Library and Archive Room, a task which could not have been done without the professional expertise, time and commitment of Susan Bennett and Janet Green. We now have an up-to-date Library catalogue on computer, listing all of our book stock and most of our non-book items. This catalogue will be made available to members and we hope that it will encourage more members to make use of the resources that are stored in the room.

We also regularly receive offers of donations of books, magazines and sometimes other materials from members. While we are grateful for all offers and we have been donated some really special items, we do have to reserve the right to dispose of anything that we already have a copy of, or which seems inappropriate for our Library. By 'dispose of', I mean try to sell them – only if this fails would we put anything into re-cycling!

4. **Younger volunteers:** We decided during the year not to take on volunteers under the age of 18, (though there was one exception to this). Over the year I supervised a number of younger volunteers, (mostly Duke of Edinburgh Award students, College students on work experience and the like), in a variety of activities which benefitted both them and us.

One example was the tedious, but invaluable, process of digitising the many hundreds of 35mm colour slides that the Observatory has in its collection. These slides cover many aspects of the birds that have been recorded here in the past, but equally of interest, a lot of the people and landscapes too.

Many old photographic prints and other archive resources have also been digitised and filed on computer and again will be available for members to look through. Things have been discovered in the archives which are really of great interest.

If any member of the Observatory has **any** material – photographic, printed or whatever, that is in any way relevant to the Observatory, (including the surrounding area too), both now and in the past, I would be interested to hear about it, so that we can discuss how a donation might be organised, or, at least, a copy made.

5. **Trips and holidays:** Trips were organised to the Scillies, Bulgaria and elsewhere. Thanks to all members who took part in these trips and to John Buckingham for organising the Bulgaria trip. All successful, much enjoyed and they have set the scene for future trips – back to the Scillies in October 2016 and to Costa Rica in early 2017.
6. **Talks and visits:** Talks to, and visits from, adult groups have continued to be an important aspect of the work of the Observatory and thanks are due to Mike Briggs and Peter Dean and others who have given talks or escorted groups.
7. **Summer Fair 2015 – Open Day 2016:** following the Summer Fair in 2015, which for the second year running was affected by bad weather, it was decided that this year (2016) we would rein back a little, (or should that be rain back?), and run just a one-day Open Day, on the August Bank Holiday Sunday. There is still a lot of work involved and lots of volunteers are still needed. There will be a meeting on Wednesday June 8th to take this forward
8. Finally, the **Development Plan:** Council drew up an initial Development Plan about 3 years ago, and a lot of the targets were actually met, but by early 2015 it needed revising, as new targets and activities came along. To start with, a small group of Council members worked on the project, but then it was widened to involve about

half of the full Council membership. We were able to make use of the invaluable services of Roger Jones, who has professional expertise in this area, in steering Council members through the process. This has involved going right back to basics

- What are we here for as an organisation?
- Where do we want to be in, say, five years?
- How are we going to get there?
- What should be our priorities, for example, in allocating our funds?

The work has taken longer than I think any of us thought it would, despite the amount of 'person-hours' invested in it, but we are now close to completing the work and the Plan should be finalised sometime in the next few weeks and it can then go out for wider consultation amongst members. We believe that the finished Plan will be of real value in helping your new Council to plan and prioritise over the next few years.

I'd like to thank all those Council members who have given up many of their Friday evenings to attend the many Development Plan meetings over the last year or more".

7. Treasurer's Report for 2015, (delivered *in absentia*).

In the absence of the Treasurer, the Chairman read out the following commentary on the Observatory's finances for the year ending 31st December 2015 to members present at the AGM. Copies of the statement of accounts for the year ended 31st December 2015 were also available to members at the meeting.

"Please accept my apologies for my absence – I am currently in Australia.

As can be seen from the copies of the accounts, there was a small surplus in 2015 of £4,888 (£6,876 in 2014), the fifth consecutive year of surplus.

Net Current Assets rose by £16,488, with our cash balances standing at £138,282 at the end of the year.

INCOME

Membership Fees increased by £1,057, with our Memberships standing at 590 (552 in 2014).

Hostel and room hire has, as expected, dropped by £11,963, following two bumper years when long term residences boosted our income. The income of £19,254 is still a large increase over the last comparative year (2012 - £15,617). Our appreciation should be acknowledged to Maggie Douet, Janice and the many other ladies who ensure that the accommodation side runs smoothly.

Club Income is on a par with 2014, whereas the profit from Holidays and Coach Trips has risen to £8,791 (£5,991 in 2014). Our thanks for the huge effort put in to make both the Clubs & Holidays both worthwhile & profitable should go to Mike Briggs, John Buckingham, Ken Chapman, Graham Goodwin and Kaye Lunn, as well as all the “volunteer” speakers at the Thursday Club.

My thanks also go to Eugene Hood for his continued work on the Gift Aid Tax reclaim, keeping it up to £5,500, as last year.

The Open Day & Open Day raffle still showed a small profit, and our thanks go to Vanessa Dent and her army of volunteers.

The Turnstone survey was carried out again this year, with income of £2,500 – our thanks to Ian Hodgson for organising this once again.

The RPA grant is down on 2014, but this is merely an accounting difficulty – the Environment Agency could not inform us of the grant due before the accounts went to audit, and with all the recent changes, I was unable to make a reasonable estimate of our expectation. A further £4,136 has since been received; this will now appear in the 2016 accounts.

An increase in the contribution of the shop from £1,994 in 2014 to £3,083 must be due to the efforts of the new Shop Committee – I hope that Sue Bennett will pass our thanks on to the other members of that committee and also to all the shop volunteers.

Our first year of generating solar power has earned us £3,543 and the electricity bill has dropped from £3,895 to £1,732, a saving of £2,163. This totals £5,706 and represents a 17% return on our investment in Solar panels of £33,500. This is not strictly accurate, as the reduction in electricity costs will, of course, also have been affected by the reduced hostel use in the year.

The accounts you have in front of you are my attempt to provide useful, understandable information for both the Trustees and yourselves. The actual Financial Statement shows income growing overall from £152,882 to £167,249. The Financial Statements from the auditors are available, should anyone wish to peruse them. They are/will available on the Charities Commission website.

EXPENDITURE

We still qualify for the Government’s relief on employers’ National Insurance this year, but this may not be an on-going relief.

Building and Office Expenses are both at a very similar level to last year.

With more Members, we had to commission more Annual Reports this year, so there is an increase of an additional £700 expenditure there; we also decided to have the newsletters printed and distributed by a third party, so the £387 represents the cost of two newsletters during the latter half of the year.

The cost of running the Land Rover is on a par with 2014 and the Reserves and Ringing Expenses are exactly the same as 2014, although Rents and Ringing costs have reduced, and our expenditure on the reserves has increased. The reserve expenses include £1,354 paid out to acquire further credits on which to claim RPA Grants.

The Financial Statements show Total Expenditure of £162,362 – an increase from the £146,004 of 2014. The more astute will note that the Financial Accounts profit (Income £167,249 less expenditure £162,362) equates to £4,887, as shown on the simplified accounts before you). With this surplus, the total assets of the Trust have risen to £476,589.

It is interesting to note that the income of the Trust has doubled since the published accounts of 2011, where the income was £83,715. Unfortunately, expenditure has likewise doubled from £81,279 in 2011. Much of this increase in volume is attributable to the very profitable holidays that we now run.

I am sure that if there are any questions on these accounts, our Chairman or Secretary will be able to answer anything concerning the reasoning behind the figures, but if you have any technical accounting questions, I will address them on my return.”

Two questions were raised from the floor:

1. *‘Why did the Observatory feel the need to hold £138, 282 in Net Current Assets?’*
In response, the Chairman stated that Council felt that this sum was needed to pay for any future planned developments, for example, arising from the Development Plan, and also to cover any unforeseen major emergencies.
2. *‘Could the statement of accounts be simplified, for example, by condensing some of the listed items?’*
In response, it was pointed out the level of detail given in the financial report was a matter of judgement, as at the AGM in 2015, at least one member was asking for a *more* detailed statement. The Chairman informed members that Council is presented with monthly up-dates on the Observatory’s finances. He thanked our Treasurer, Keith Ellis, for his work in producing these statements and for the commentary, given above.

8. Warden’s Report for 2015:

The Observatory Warden, Ian Hodgson, delivered the following report on 2015,

(Reported verbatim):

“January and February were about normal in terms of temperature and winter was consequently a benign affair. However, a NE wind set in during early March, which was little warmer than winter had been, and cold winds persisted throughout April and May, only relenting in the second half of June. Avian highlights were few and far between and rarities mainly in Pegwell, although two Black-winged Stilts were on New Downs in late May, a Cattle Egret was on Worth in early June and Bee-eaters elevated an otherwise unproductive first half of the year, with parties of up to five continuing to be seen during July, which also featured unprecedented numbers of Siskins.

August brought little that was exceptional, but September saw the establishment of an easterly airflow that produced some of the best autumn birding on record at the Bay. However, the main feature of the month involved Siskins, which were on the move in exceptional numbers from early in the month, culminating in an incredible movement of 4,520 on the 17th, along with 94 Grey Wagtails that both broke existing British records by a street. Rarities had already included a very early Radde’s Warbler but a Pallid Harrier on the 23rd was the first for the Observatory and it was followed within half a cup of coffee by news of a Red-footed Falcon in more or less the same spot on Worth. Seven Yellow-browed Warblers on the 29th were part of a record influx of at least 19 individuals that continued into October, the start of which featured a huge arrival of 600 Goldcrests on the 2nd. The first of a total of at least nine Great Grey Shrikes appeared on the 15th; a remarkable number for a species that had eluded most local observers for the best part of two decades and an eastern Lesser Whitethroat was trapped on the 18th, DNA analysis later confirming that it was identical to a *S.c.blythi* previously sequenced from Kazakhstan. A Pallas’s Warbler near Dickson’s Corner on the 19th struck us as the icing on the cake at the time, but the autumn still had the Observatory’s second Red-flanked Bluetail up its sleeve, trapped in the Whitehouse the next day.

Factor in more or less constant large numbers of pipits, wagtails and finches that were on the move throughout September and October, some very large falls of Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and Goldcrests and even an outstanding sea-watch in November that produced nine Little Auks, two Long-tailed Ducks and a broad range of other notables and autumn 2015 was truly memorable. The year culminated in a total of 236 species, not far short of the record of 241 in 2008, a year that had the good grace to be productive in both spring and autumn.

For butterflies it was a trying season. The long, cold spring and very dry conditions from February onwards ensured a bad year for specialist species (those that use specific food plants), while generalists (those that have a broader range of larval food plants) mostly fared reasonably well. The most prominent losers this year were Brown Argus and Common Blue, while Small Copper and Marbled White also did poorly. On the plus side, Gatekeeper and Small Heath did very well, it was an encouraging year for Wall Brown and Large Skipper and Clouded Yellow bred in numbers for the second successive year on the spillways enclosing the flood defence scheme on New Downs.

The cold spring also ensured a difficult year for dragonflies, which featured little or no obvious migration, despite the occurrence of some outstanding migrant moths.

However, the year was saved by the discovery of the Bay's first records of Scarce Emerald Damselfly.

Moth studies continued and it was an excellent year for migrants, with record totals for the Observatory of Vestal, Scarce Bordered Straw, Bordered Straw and Small Mottled Willow. 349 macro moth species were recorded, including six that were new for the recording area, bringing the Observatory total to 515.

My thanks again go to the photographers who have contributed so many images throughout the year, particularly to Steve Ray. Thanks also to Sandwich Bay Sailing & Water-skiing Club for permission to access their flag deck, which has been most useful when the weather has been challenging".

9. Ringling Report for 2015:

The Observatory's Senior Ringer, Ian Hunter, delivered the following report on ringing activities in 2015.

(Reported verbatim):

"This is a summary of the ringing group's activities in 2015. A more complete report is written by the Ringing Secretary, Keith Ellis and this will appear in the Annual Report for 2015.

11,014 birds of 76 species were ringed in 2015 and, possibly for the first time ever, all these birds were trapped within the Observatory's main Recording Area. The highest numbers ever of eight species were ringed, namely: Goldcrest, (1653); Blackcap, (1632); Siskin, (1296); Chiffchaff, (1141); Goldfinch,(219); Jackdaw, (55); Green Woodpecker, (26) and Firecrest, (49). The total for Siskin is truly exceptional as the previous highest annual total was 56. This movement was as a result of two good breeding seasons sandwiched around a good food crop in the north and west of the British Isles. There were no Siskin re-traps during this time but two birds were controlled, one from Somerset and one from Cumberland. Goldcrest was the 'top' species, again reflecting a heavy passage but this time from further afield with Birds from Sweden, (1,100 kilometres in 26 days) and the Netherlands, (165 kilometres in a day). We are still awaiting details of a Latvian-ringed bird).

Red-flanked Bluetail was a new species for the ringing list and a Siberian Lesser Whitethroat, (*Sylvia curruca blythii*), was a new sub-species. This bird was confirmed by DNA analysis of a couple of shed feathers. Thanks are due to Professor Mark Collinson from Aberdeen University for the analysis.

Birds ringed at the Bay were recovered or controlled in Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Poland and the Netherlands and we controlled birds from Spain, Latvia, France, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands.

On the downside, there were no Turtle Doves, Yellow Wagtails or Tree Sparrows ringed in 2015. As we no longer access Backsand Scrape, we do not catch Common Sandpipers. A paper on Common Sandpipers, summarising what has been found will be in the 2015 Annual Report.

We completed the first year of two projects as part of the national 'Re-trapping Adults for Survival', (RAS), scheme. We are studying House Sparrows and Collared Doves around the Observatory H.Q. As both species learn very quickly to avoid our traps, we are also colour-ringing them. In the first 12 months, 142 House Sparrows were colour-ringed, of which 48 were re-sighted, (plus more since). Ten of these were seen on 5 or more occasions, with House Sparrow 'BAZ' being the most frequent, seen on 18 occasions.

In terms of personnel, we are still looking for new trainees but of the existing team, Beck Johnson and Maria Himsworth progressed from 'T' to 'C' permit status and John Buckingham from 'C' to 'A'.

Finally, I would like to thank Royal St. Georges Golf Club and Richard daw for their permission to access land where we do our day-to-day ringing"

10. Tim Garland award for 2015:

In announcing the recipient of the Tim Garland Award for 2015, the Chairman reminded members that this award had originally been designed to recognise work done by any member of the Observatory in advancing the understanding of birds and other wildlife of the area, but in later years had also been awarded to any member who had made a major contribution in other areas. The Award is made by consultation with, and consent of, previous holders of the Award.

Candidates for 2015 had included John Buckingham for his work in organising trips and talks; Martin Shepherd for his work on the Conservation Team and John Websper for his contributions over many years. However, there had been a clear majority in favour of making the Award to Ken Chapman, primarily for his work on the flora of Sandwich Bay, in working on the Observatory's archives and in the supervision of volunteers through the year.

11. Election of Officers and Trustees for 2016 – 2017:

The Secretary informed the meeting that nominations, duly proposed and seconded, had been received to fill all the available posts for the Trust's Honorary posts, (President, Vice-Presidents, Patrons), Officers and other Trustees.

A query was raised as to whether the Observatory President was still willing to continue with this post. The Chairman informed the AGM that, when last contacted, Bill Oddie had let it be known that he *did* wish to continue, although he could not make any commitments in terms of making visits to the Observatory.

All of the existing Officers and Trustees were intending to stay on the Council, although with one or two changes in status. Andrew Lipczynski was standing down as Chairman after three years, with Ken Chapman standing as Chairman in his place. Sue Bennett had been proposed and seconded as Secretary. Mike Briggs and Keith Ellis would remain as, respectively, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer.

In the absence of the need for a vote, it was proposed to elect all of the nominated persons *en bloc* and this was duly carried by a show of hands.

The Observatory's Honorary Officers for 2016 – 2017:

President: Bill Oddie;

Vice-Presidents: Mike Sykes and John Websper.

Patrons: Justin de Villeneuve and Sue Timney de Villeneuve

The Observatory Council for 2016-2017:

Chairman: Ken Chapman

Vice-Chairman: Mike Briggs

Secretary: Sue Bennett

Treasurer: Keith Ellis

Other Trustees: Karen Bartlett ; John Buckingham ; Peter Dean; Vanessa Dent; Sarah Fawcett; Nigel Hefford; Alastair Henderson; Eugene Hood; Ian Hunter; Sally Hunter; Becky Johnson; Andy Keen; Andrew Lipczynski; Nick Smith.

From the floor, John Hollyer made some observations, from a personal perspective, about the composition of the newly-elected Council.

12. Any Other Business:

- a) **Safety of Observatory Records:** A query was raised from the floor regarding the safety of archived records kept at the Observatory. In response, it was pointed out that all the past Annual Reports are digitised and copies stored off-site. Data relating to bird records for the last eight years is stored electronically, including

off-site. As the present Recorder6 project proceeds to digitise past Daily Census Sheets dating back to the 1960's, the original paper-based records for these years were also being stored separately. At the moment, the files were kept in fire-retardant steel cabinets in the Observatory Archive / Library. Ringing records are submitted electronically to the BTO every year.

- b) **Presentation to retiring Chairman:** Ken Chapman, as Secretary, informed the meeting that all members of the Council had 'clubbed together' to buy a book token for Andrew Lipczynski, in appreciation of all of his work for the Observatory as Chairman over the past three years and in particular in his role as Chair of the Council meetings, which had been run smoothly and to good effect during his period of office.

A short presentation ceremony then took place.

There being no further items of Any Other Business, the meeting closed at 4.p.m.

Ken Chapman, (Secretary)

June 9th 2016