

**Minutes of annual general meeting 21 June 2015**

Members present: Derek Cutt, Derek Emes, Jim O'Donoghue, John Parker,  
Matt Parker, Pam Pickett, Neil Rickman.

**Apologies**

Alessio Falino, Phil Hill, Olly Hinton, Dean Pawlyn, Judith Qualtrough, Nigel Williamson.

**Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous AGM on 20 July 2014 were approved as a true record of that meeting.

**Actions from the previous AGM minutes**

DE to continue liaising with the former officers of the now wound-up CGCA re transfer of funds.  
**Ongoing.** Derek has spoken yet again to Chris Austin and to John Gale (who administers the CGCA bank account) but the funds have not yet been transferred. The account may be suspended due to lack of use.

**Action:** DE to raise it with John Gale again, as soon as convenient.

**Post-meeting note:** DE has spoken (22 June 2015) to both JG and CA. They are investigating with their bank.

DC to inform Paul Hendry at WBC that Derek Emes remains our nominated Commissioner.

**Completed.**

DC to ask Simon Barnett about the insurance position and any other implications of taking DoE volunteers.

**Completed.** One of BBOWT's standard protocols is to require a completed parental consent form for under-eighteens.

JO'D to liaise with Ade to ensure we have adequate secure storage in the workshop.

**Completed with two hours to spare!** Ade has offered us the use of the green metal storage unit in the yard, either permanently, or for the Rangers to put our things in beforehand if we will have no Ranger with us on the Sunday.

**Action:** JO'D to arrange with Ade to gain access to clean the store, refurbish as necessary, obtain and distribute keys.

DC to ask Simon Barnett about training, and let members know by e-mail how best to access information on what's available.

**Completed.** All members who have completed the BBOWT volunteer registration forms should be on BBOWT's e-mail list for "Developing Your Skills" courses.

**Post-meeting note:** First aid training may also be available, although it is not usually listed on the DYS e-mailings. Members should contact Simon Barnett if they are interested.

## **Election of officers for year 2015-16**

The current officers all indicated their willingness to stand again. There being no alternative nominations, all were unanimously re-elected. Officers for the coming year therefore remain...

Chairman: John Parker  
Secretary: Derek Cutt  
Treasurer: Neil Rickman  
Tools Officer: Jim O'Donoghue

Derek Emes had also offered to continue to serve as our appointee on the Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission. There being no alternative nomination, he was unanimously re-elected. Derek Emes therefore remains our appointed Commissioner.

Action: DC to inform Paul Hendry of WBC that DE remains our nominated Commissioner.  
Post-meeting note: action completed.

## **Chairman's report on activities since the previous AGM**

John had e-mailed his report beforehand. It is reproduced below:

During the last year we have undertaken the usual tasks of scrub clearance, removing non-native species and a range of repair and maintenance activities during the nesting season.

Over successive months we cleared Italian alder from the area around Estovers and the nearby pond. An area of Italian alder was also removed from compartment 14 in the southeast corner of the common, again on consecutive tasks. On two further tasks we cleared the area around the seasonal ponds in the area to the south of the Brimpton Road. We cleared the western area of Bishop's Green of birch scrub in October and November. This pattern of working at the same area on 2 consecutive months enabled us to make a visible and lasting impact to the habitats in those areas.

Our maintenance tasks have included fence clearance and repair, installation of dragon's teeth and signs, renovation of signs and barriers and pothole repair at the Crookham car park (which earned us an apple pie from an appreciative member of the public).

Our Christmas event in December was again a success with the construction of the usual "wooden" BBQ (making good use of the felled Italian alder!).

Our numbers have averaged around 9 for each task, varying from 7 up to 15.

In January we were "inspected" by another ranger from a different BBOWT site who gave us his seal of approval.

I would like to thank the following for their support during the year:

- Derek Cutt as Secretary and Neil Rickman as Treasurer.
- Ade and the BBOWT Ranger team for their support and providing us with a range of tasks and the materials required to carry them out.
- Derek Cutt for keeping our web site up to date and Pam Pickett for being our "chief photographer".
- Jim O'Donoghue for looking after our tools.
- All the members who have turned up to provide the "elbow grease".
- Derek Emes as our elected representative on the Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission.

We have supported the West Berkshire Youth Offending Team by providing an opportunity for those doing Community Service to contribute something to supporting the environment. In addition we have had other young people work with us to undertake the service element of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Here's looking forward to another year in which we can help to improve the Commons for the benefit of all their users.

John Parker, Chairman, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2015

## **Treasurer's report**

Neil presented the latest financial position, and reported that expenditure in the past year was limited to the purchase of some silky blades and a set of bellows.

At the current level of expenditure we have enough funds to last about four years.

The Treasurer's report and the accounts were accepted, with thanks to Neil.

## **Report from the Greenham & Crookham Commons Commission**

Derek Emes presented his report, the text of which is reproduced below:

First to report is that every 3 years the Commission membership comes up for renewal with an election for Commoner members. Elections are supposed to be held in May with the elected members confirmed by the 31<sup>st</sup>. This year the timetable has slipped and mid July will be the confirmed list. Appointed members are expected to be confirmed every year by the 31<sup>st</sup> May. This is only done in practice if there is a change. We hold our own election annually and pass our result to W.B.C. Countryside Manager for him to present to the Commission with their selected appointee.

Over the last 12 months there have been several changes in positions and personnel. A large upheaval arose early on before this 12 month period regarding support over the upgrading of the Control Tower. The Chairman, Tony Fergusson, Who had been a Lib.Dem. Councillor and Dominic Boeck a Conservative Councillor had a political dispute over the matter and the Chairman resigned. Chris Tufnell, a Commoner was elected Chairman. The Clerk at the time was under pressure in trying to keep documentation finalised due to various disagreements and problems of available finance to meet her remuneration, resigned. Chris Tufnell has imposed much better discipline and the W.B.C. are providing a temporary Clerk Sarah Adams. There have been further appointee changes since the May 2015 local election

There are a great many topics that have been up for reporting and discussion, the principal ones of interest to us were (a) Grazing rights and cattle numbers (b) Cattle TB(c) Gorse control(d) Ragwort control (e) Management Plan (f) Commons' access (g) Commission Website. I give a few notes here that can be elaborated on verbally as required or necessary.

(a)Commoners with grazing rights are still to be properly listed. It is clear some Commoners are in excess of their property rights. Their cattle numbers are beyond those rights It appears that some graziers are using rights of commoners not using their own. Some concern has been expressed on possible overgrazing. At least one grazier has been using horse rights to graze cattle.

(b)TB outbreak has prevented cattle from being sold or being moved from the area. Graziers can (but choose not to) move their cattle onto their own land adjoining the common but no further. Regular tests are still underway until 120 days all clear is reached when restrictions will be lifted. Badger culling or vaccination was discussed. BBOWT have applied for funding to carry out vaccination which is still outstanding.

(c) Regular gorse cutting of 6.7 Ha per annum is underway which gives a 6 year rotation. Unfortunately the contactor's machine broke down in spring and could not be repaired before the nesting season. Next year the omitted area will be added to the 6.7Ha. Graziers prefer to see where gorse impinges on grazing land to be dealt with first but general ecology is to enforce varied cut areas. Ariel photography will be undertaken to clarify where sequenced cutting will be done.

(d) It was agreed that ragwort is not a risk in all situations. It also is a host for various insect species in particular the Cinnabar moth. A risk assessment was drafted, commented on and now agreed.

(e)The management plan is virtually complete now, it having been complemented with BBOWT's own plans. It will still have to be under regular scrutiny however to meet with new regulations, imbalances arising etc.

(f) A full access audit was carried out by BBOWT which identifies gates types and locations, paths, fences and the like. This has been commented on and shortly will be published. A perimeter

identification was taken before this 12 month period which produced a number of anomalies, some of which are still to be cleared.

(g) The website was set up 5 years ago with the help of the New Greenham Trust. I worked with NGT to produce it and managed it for a while. When we got our Clerk I handed it over to her. However as stated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph above, she was being so messed about she had no time to keep it up to date. Then the Greenham Councillor said he would take it on but again he was so busy with his social business it lapsed. This was brought up in a meeting, but with no decision reached. In discussing this with Chris Tufnell later, I found myself agreeing to take it on again. I worked with the same lady at NGT, Teresa Newson, and we got it edited and drafted up to date. I received a disc with FTP Commander on with the draft supposedly loaded. I had worked HTML originally but this program is simpler. The problem was that it only half downloaded. I eventually found out that the server NGT used had been hacked. I am waiting for a new clean disc.

Other matters currently under review are cattle round up protocol (vehicle use); detailed boundary identification (encroachments in particular); Filming policy ; Bye laws and vehicle access permission (bicycles are considered vehicles under law)

**If members want anything raised at any future Commission meeting, please let Derek Emes know.**

### **Other business**

John Mentioned that he had recently noticed that the footpath south of the silo area is in better condition, following remediation work by us and other groups. However he had also noticed areas where footpaths are being eroded by cyclists. He had also noted two trees fallen across footpaths.

**Action: JP to point these items out to Ade.**

**Post-meeting note: action completed.**

John also noted that in the past year we have, several times, worked in the same area or the same project (e.g. Italian alder removal) in consecutive months. This increases our impact and gives a greater degree of job satisfaction.

### **Web addresses for information**

Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission: [www.greenhamccc.org.uk](http://www.greenhamccc.org.uk)

Management plan: [www.westcombe.org.uk](http://www.westcombe.org.uk)