



DURSLEY BIRDWATCHING AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

FEBRUARY



FROM YOUR CHAIR

Welcome to the first 2025 issue of the Society Bulletin. We are already half way through January as I write this but I wish you all a very happy New Year.

However, I am saddened to report the passing of our treasurer David Wood after a relatively short but devastating illness. David did an excellent job steering the society finances into a stable condition, often advising the committee and being the voice of reason. He even changed our banking arrangements to a different bank to the benefit our accounts as he was unhappy with the charges levied by the original account. He was definitely as they say in politics 'a safe pair of hands'. On a personal level I was on many birding adventures with him on society trips and found him a warm and generous person. David and Barbara have been long standing members of the society and played an active role. Our thoughts are with Barbara and family at this time.

David's funeral will be on January 30th; 11:00 am at 11 am at the Catholic church, Beeches Green, Stroud. Please let Barbara know (through the What'sApp group) if you plan to attend.

You already know that I am standing down from the Chair at the AGM, and we need new committee members to run the society. There is a nominations form included with this Bulletin.

Ken

INDOOR MEETING DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

27th January 2025 1:45 - Philip Mugridge

Philip and his wife Helen are a fantastic photographic team. This talk will explore the wild life of the Orkney Islands

24th February 1:45 - Jackie Harris

Jackie will explain what makes each WWT site special, including the main headquarters at Slimbridge.

31st March 7:30 - AGM

Please try and attend the AGM. Without the support of our members, the Society will not continue.

Indoor meetings are held at Dursley Community Centre, Rednock Drive, Dursley GL11 4BX



FORTHCOMING TRIPS - All trips will be bookable on the web site

Somerset Levels & Starling Roost

Leader: **Amanda Sultan-Black**

Sunday 9th February

Meet in the RSPB Ham Wall car-park at 2:00pm - we will then move on to Shapwick for the starling roost for about 4:00pm. There is an option to meet at the **Ring O'Bells** for lunch (<https://ringobellsmoorlinch.co.uk>) A table for 10 is booked in the name of 'Dursley Birders' for 12:00. There is no need to pre-order if we all have a Sunday Roast lunch. If you need to contact the pub, (Tel: **01458 210358**) please mention you are with 'Dursley Birders'

Oldbury on Severn

Leader: **Dot Jones**

Sunday 23rd February

Meet in the car-park at the power station at 9:00am .

River Frome Walk to Stroud Brewery

Leader: **Simon Ashley**

Sunday 9th March

Suggested parking is at Cheapside Car park, 27 Bath Road, Stroud GL5 2AD (which is free on Sundays) and we will meet outside Travis Perkins at 10:30. The plan is to walk along the river to the Brewery for lunch. There will be plenty of bird watching along the way, and there might be Otters! Please make sure to book for this so we can let the brewery know how many to expect.

Cotswold Water Park

Leader: **t.b.c.**

Sunday 23rd March - Further details to follow

Portland Bill

Leader: **Simon Ashley**

Sunday 6th April - Further details to follow

Cleeve Hill

Leader: **t.b.c**

Sunday 13th April - Further details to follow

Coombe Hill Meadow

Leader: **Simon Ashley**

Sunday 27th April - Further details to follow

NB: If any trip is in doubt because of bad weather or unexpected circumstances or has to be cancelled- we will try and contact everyone by telephone or through the 'WhatsApp' group. We will also put a notice on our website and inform members by e-mail. It is important therefore that we have your contact details.

If you would like to be added to the 'WhatsApp' Group, please contact Caroline Sandrey (Membership Secretary) caroline.sandrey@gmail.com or Simon Ashley (DBWPS Secretary) simonashley65@gmail.com



TRIP REPORTS

Frampton in Winter

Sunday 5th January

Report from: **Caroline Sandrey**

Firstly apologies that this visit to Frampton was not published in recent Bulletins. Unfortunately I did not have the information and at the crucial time our website was down, so the details were not available.

3 VERY hardy members and a visitor (my husband) joined Nick Goatman, our walk leader, at 8:30 on a cold and wet morning. The walk was in doubt owing to the dire weather forecast of snow and rain over the weekend. However, the day started with only the forecast of light rain, and as the snow was melting, and we were lured by the possible sighting of the Yellow-browed Warbler which has been visiting recently.

We started at the Sailing Lake, (I could barely see across the lake through misted glasses and wet binoculars) the Yellow-legged Gull was not to be seen, but there were Cormorants, Pochard, Great Crested Grebe, Heron, Tufted Duck and Mute swan.

Moving on to the Court Lake field we made our way to the trees where the Yellow-browed Warbler had previously been seen. We weren't there very long before the tiny bedraggled warbler made an appearance. We were able to watch him for 5 minutes or so as he hopped around the trees feeding under the leaves, seemingly completely unperturbed by his audience. None of us had brought a 'proper' camera so we had to make do with phone shots. Many thanks to Colin Greenfield who agreed to share the picture he managed to take the previous week.



Once the Yellow-browed Warbler flew off we continued our walk, but the expected 'light' rain turned quite heavy and the birds were very quiet. We did see a good group of Siskins high in the trees and glimpses of Long-tailed Tits and a few other passerines. The lakes were also quiet but through the rain we were able to see some of the resident waterfowl.

We were glad to get back to the cars and out of the pouring rain but I think we all bathed in the glow of excitement of having seen the little Yellow-browed Warbler. Many thanks to Nick for leading the walk.

Species list:

Greylag and Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Shoveler, Gadwall, Wigeon, Mallard, Teal, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Golden Eye, Woodpigeon, Feral Pigeon, Moorhen, Coot, Black-headed Gull, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Magpie, Rook, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Redwing, Robin, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Siskin AND Yellow-browed Warbler.



Exmouth Birdwatching Boat Cruise

Report from: **Amanda Sultan-Black**

Saturday 11th January -

A group of fourteen hardy birders met up in Dursley with our community mini bus driver Robert (kindly provided to us courtesy of Dignity Dursley Funeral Directors) for our 7am departure to Exmouth. It was dark and very cold and in the days preceding we had seen freezing temperatures and even some snow. However, the forecast promised a warmer brighter day at our destination. Although many of us had experience of winter birdwatching along the shore of the River Exe and estuary area, such as Dawlish Warren and RSPB Bowling Green Marsh, none of us had taken the Winter Birdwatching Cruise with the Stuart Line Boat Company. Needless to say we were excited for what the 3 hour cruise may bring, as in the winter season the Exe estuary attracts up to 30,000 birds to overwinter and feed on the 'smorgasbord' of specialised invertebrates and fauna in the 20sq. kms of extensive mudflats and marsh .

To whet your appetite here is an excerpt from the cruise company:

<https://www.exe-estuary.org/visitor-information/wildlife/wildlife-on-the-exe/>

"The Exe Estuary is one of the most highly designated sites in the South West and is protected for its globally important wildlife and habitats. The estuary is a feeding and breeding ground for thousands of birds, supporting internationally important populations such as Redshank, with Exminster one of only two places in Devon where they breed.

The Exe Estuary is the winter home to one percent of the world's population of Dark-bellied Brent Goose, which rest at high tide roosts and feed on eelgrass beds after a long migration from Siberia.

*The tidal mudflats are home to an abundance of invertebrate species such as snails, worms and clams, making the estuary as rich in biodiversity as a tropical rainforest. A nationally rare bristle worm *Ophelia bicornis* can be found at Exmouth Local Nature Reserve. The reason why so many wading birds flock here in the winter is that the invertebrates are a vital food source, with each cubic metre of estuary mud containing the same calorific value as 14 Mars bars."*

The sky slowly brightened and the sun rose with a rosy glow as we made our way south to Exmouth harbour. However, as we pulled into the carpark the sky darkened and it began to rain, but undeterred we stood in line and waited patiently to board our boat as priority was being given to loading pasties before passengers! On board we had a choice of staying on deck with blankets offered to keep us warm, or go below deck where there were also splendid views and it was warmer... Most of us started out on deck and eventually found our way below to warm up with a yummy pasty, hot drinks and complimentary mince pie.

Meanwhile, back to the birds we saw in the excellent conditions of the Exe estuary. On board we enjoyed an excellent commentary provided by Andy Smith our local expert. Birds and mammals were located, identified and supplemented with nuggets of educational information.

Here are a few 'Did You Know' examples:

- The reason that Shelduck winter here is to feed on the high density of mud snails (hydrobia), up to 10,000 per m² whilst up to 500 Pied Avocets are feasting upon the abundance of shrimps and the mud snails.
- Mergansers can fly up to 60mph!
- Sanderlings only have three toes on each foot; they are missing the hind toe, which gives them a distinctive running action and enables them to run faster in and out of the shoreline waves. Now we know why they look like wound up clockwork toys dashing to and fro...



Ready for the trip!



Moving on to a selection of what we saw:

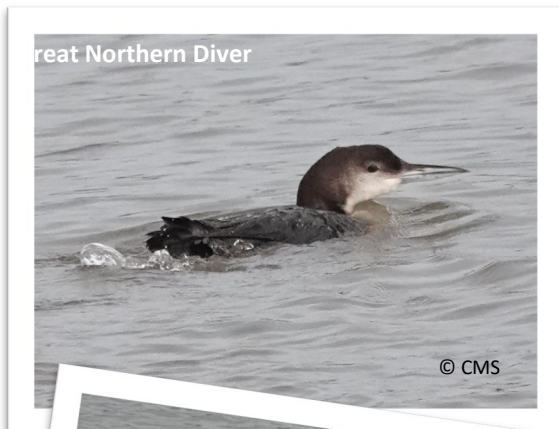
As the boat headed into the estuary we had Dawlish Warren *portside/left* and Exmouth town *starboard* on our right. (Thought I'd throw in some nautical terms!) We began to see Oystercatchers, Brent Geese, a few Common Shelduck and Black Tailed Godwit. As we made our way up the estuary the rain stopped and the sky brightened to become sunny which lifted our spirits no end. Shortly a seal was sighted swimming. Initially thought to be a Grey Seal but the expert consensus was that a Grey Seal has a Roman nose and this had a short muzzle making it a Harbour Seal aka Common Seal.

As we made progress many more species began to be seen some in large and impressive numbers. Dark Bellied Brent Geese and flocks of Pied Avocet were grazing close by and we had distant views of Northern Pintail and a few Common Eider. A flock of 1,000 Black Tailed Godwit were seen near Topsham with a flock of about 40 Knot amongst them. We even had a large gaggle of the geese treat us to a noisy flypast. Northern Lapwing numbers increased and Eurasian Curlew could be seen and heard. Twice during our cruise we were given excellent close views of Red Breasted Mergansers with their punk styled hairdos.

We had the opportunity to observe the differences between Cormorants and Shags.



A pair of Shags, glowing in the sun



Great Northern Diver

© CMS



© Vaclav Cepelcha



Sanderling

© Colin Greenfield

One of the many highlights must have been the sightings of Great Northern Divers, with one even putting on a great preening display very close to the boat.

Due to recent heavy rainfalls and the high tide the boat was able to navigate further up the estuary than normal up past Topsham which is where we were treated to great views of a Common Kingfisher perched on some dead wood. As the boat returned up the channel a few of us spotted him again (or perhaps another) perched high on a moored boats mast.

Another highlight was watching a Grey Seal after a number of attempts eventually successfully hauling out onto a pontoon and our Captain Jake managed to navigate us up close without disturbing it at all.

A flock of approx. 500 Golden Plover were seen roosting tightly together on the mudflats in the distance. As we drew nearer to Exmouth 8 Sanderling were seen scurrying along Bull Hill mudflat.

All too soon we docked back at the harbour, boarded our minibus and were driven homeward by our able driver Robert. All in all it was a great day, which may even become an annual Dursley Birders event.

Special thanks go out to Dursley Funeral Directors. part of the Dignity Group, who kindly provided us with a minibus and driver for the day.

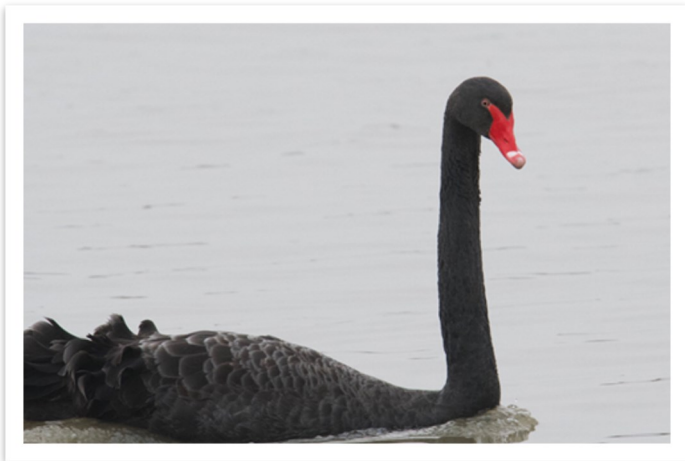
Bird List: Brent and Canada Geese, Mute Swan, Shelduck, Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Teal, Red-breasted Merganser, Oystercatcher, Feral Pigeon, Woodpigeon, Avocet, Grey Plover, Eider, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Kingfisher, Sanderling, Com-

mon Sandpiper, Redshank, Greenshank, Turnstone, Red Knot, Dunlin, Black-headed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Common Gull, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Great Northern Diver, Cormorant, Shag, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Buzzard, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Starling, Pied Wagtail.



12 hardy members met up at the car park on a very cold morning with the promise that it wouldn't get any warmer (spoiler - it didn't) before heading into Slimbridge to commence our tour of the hides, led as usual by our own "Guide in the hide", Dot.

We were all pleased to start in the Peng observatory, which as well as giving views of an extensive range of birds, was also warm. The water to the front of the observatory was dominated by a substantial number of Bewick's swans. We were all sad to learn that there were no cygnets this year. Dot informed us that this was understood to be due to heavy rains at the wrong point in the breeding cycle causing all nests to fail. We did though, see a good proportion of the over 90 swans that have returned this winter. At the edge of the swans Dot pointed out two notably larger swans, two Whoopers, including one that over-wintered at Slimbridge last year. As well as the swans the area was full of many ducks including Pochard, Pintail, Shelduck, Mallard, Teal and Tufted Ducks.



Unfortunately we then had to head out of the warmth, initially stopping at Robbie Garnet to check out the Tack Piece. This was busy with Lapwing, Golden Plover, Dunlin, a few Ruff and Redshank as well as many ducks (including Shoveler and Wigeon), geese, and swans. Here we found Bruce the Black Swan and so had now seen all 4 swan species found in the UK, although of course the Black Swan is still of questionable status.

Barnacle Geese, the single Ross's Goose, Curlew, a lone Peregrine and 8 Cranes. Unfortunately we were unable to pick out a Little Stint that may have been in amongst the many Dunlin on the Tack Piece. It was later found, although not by us, so it is still there for anyone who wants to test their wader identification skills.

A walk across the site brought us to the Discovery Hide and the South Lake. Here the adolescent Spoon-bill was doing what Spoonbills seem to spend most of their time doing - sleeping. Good numbers of birds again which added Avocet, Great Crested Grebe and Gadwall, to our growing tally for the day. The highlight for me though was a male Sparrowhawk, hunting along the row of reeds at the back of the lake.





After warming up in the comparative comfort afforded by the Discovery Hide we headed out towards the Kingfisher hide, stopping on the way to observe a Kingfisher. At the Kingfisher hide notable additions to our list included; Coat Tit (currently a "banker" at Slimbridge) and a pair of Stonechats feeding very close to the hide. The same male Sparrowhawk we saw earlier, was seen to continue its hunt, this time along the Four Score field.

Our final stop was at the Zeiss hide as we had heard a Green-winged Teal had been spotted there. We looked through a small flock of Teal and by a process of elimination focused on a likely candidate. After what seemed much longer than it really was the bird drifted through 90 degrees to show its vertical white strip confirming our final entry to our list for the day.



In total we had at least 64 species, List below compiled by Simon. Pictures courtesy of Oliver Paisey

Greylag Goose, Barnacle Goose, Canada Goose, Ross's Goose, Mute Swan, Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Black Swan, Shelduck, Shoveler, Gadwall, Wigeon, Mallard, Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Green-winged Teal, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Feral Pigeon, Moorhen, Coot, Crane, Avocet, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Snipe, Redshank, Ruff, Dunlin, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Great-crested Grebe, Cormorant, Spoonbill, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kingfisher, Peregrine, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Stonechat, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Siskin.

Please note the AGM will be held in March and nominations are being sought from Society members who wish to serve on the Management Committee. All twelve positions on the Committee are due for re-election. These positions are: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, plus up to eight persons as Committee Members.

The positions of Bulletin Editor, Membership Secretary and Programme Secretary are filled normally, but not exclusively, from the committee. Nominations for these posts will be assumed to be also for the committee unless stated otherwise.



FROM OUR MEMBERS

Nurture Nature Notes for February 2025 - Otis Tarda

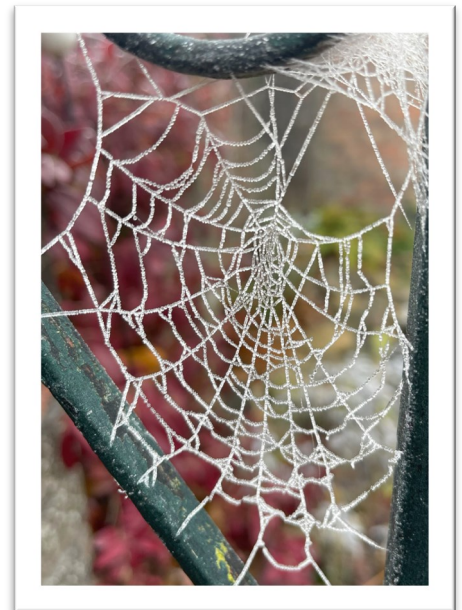
COP 29 has come and gone, and readers will draw their own conclusions as to its effectiveness or otherwise. With all the wars currently being waged it is doubtful whether leaders of oil producing countries, who are often the main protagonists, will lessen their oil and gas outputs. There are adverse knock-on effects to Nature worldwide. Biodiversity is taking a bashing. We are living in a warming world, and we await the climate scientists' reports as to whether last year will be designated the warmest year on record, in which temperatures average 1.5° C above pre industrial levels. The Arctic sea ice is estimated to have declined by 50%. A similar effect is happening in Antarctica. Polar bears and especially cubs are imperilled as they fall through the thinning sea ice and they often don't survive. Young penguins are especially vulnerable when journeying to the sea from the breeding grounds. Due to lack of sea ice over which to make their journeys, many are having to jump off 60ft high cliffs to reach the ocean. What goes on at the Poles affects all the world's oceans.

Hopefully, robins got special treats on Winter Solstice Day, 21st December, the shortest day of the year, which was also the designated day of our much loved national bird.

Arachnids - spiders to you and me - had a good mating season - a respected columnist in a daily newspaper reported "Autumn sun adds sexual heat to spider season". Work-of-Art webs were resplendent in the sunlight, and when decorated with raindrops, sparkled like jewels. The mating procedures of spiders are fascinating - however, the mating game does often end in the females gobbling their spouses.

There is also a buzz on the winter flowering shrubs such as mahonia, lonicera fragrantissima (winter flowering honeysuckle) and abelia grandiflora, as the yellow tailed bumble bees are busy collecting nectar even on cold days.

Grey squirrels - an alien species, and a threat to our beautiful native red squirrels, have come in for a bad press lately - many people encourage the greys by hand feeding them in parks and gardens. But be aware, as they can carry disease, and a bite from one could be serious.



They have also been known to attack humans, hence a headline in a daily paper in the autumn "Passengers flee train under attack from rogue squirrels".

This happened on the 8.54 a.m. GWR Reading to Gatwick service on 16th September. (You can Google it).



To complete the brief notes about corvid populations - Hooded Crows are mainly confined to Scotland and Ireland, and Ravens have now spread to southern England. Back in 1992 the writer was scoffed at when he reported to a local Conservation Group that he had heard and seen a raven over Salisbury Plain. However, soon there were reports of the gruff croak of airborne ravens above southern England. Choughs have made a comeback and are to be seen on cliffs in Cornwall on the Lizard Peninsula, and they are moving inland too.



Jays are well distributed in the British Isles and Europe. They are medium sized crows with brightly coloured plumage and beautiful bright blue wing patches much prized by fly fishermen.



Magpies are ubiquitous now; in former years keepers controlled their numbers to protect game birds. They are clever birds but are known predators of garden, wood and hedgerow birds, plundering eggs and nestlings, and are responsible for the decline in numbers of many of our garden birds. One cannot mistake their cackling voice, and they have also spread to towns, cities and parks.

Happy New Year to All and hoping you'll have a constructive year nurturing nature. Conservation education is so important for everybody, and especially for children, some of whom will hopefully follow the trail of the naturalist.

Otis Tarda

GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Enclosed with this Bulletin is our new Grant Application Form. Please share with any organisation who would be interested in some help with an idea or project that fulfils the aims of Dursley Bird Watching and Preservation Society. Applications are invited from schools, community groups or other charities. Our first successful application was from Chew Valley Ringing Station who will use their grant towards their Garden Ringing Site refurbishment; replacing old nets and poles and improving the area for visitors.

DURSLEY PET SHOP

Remember, if you show your membership card in the Dursley Pet Shop you will be entitled to a 10% discount on a wide range of gardening items sold in the shop such as seeds and bulbs etc. as well as the usual discount received on bird related items.



EDITOR'S 'BIT'

Thank you to Otis Tarda; Amanda Sultan-Black, Colin Greenfield, Vaclav Ceplecha, Mike Tranter , Oliver Paisey and of course Ken Cservenka for their contributions this month.



Don't forget the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch 24th, 25th 26th January. Perhaps you could share your results and photographs in the next bulletin. **Please** think about sharing any items of news you have, or birds you have seen - Send any articles or photographs for the next bulletin by **15th of the month** to me by email at caroline.sandrey@gmail.com or by post to me at the address below.

CMS

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

DBWPS Annual Memberships run from January 1st each year. If you do not renew your membership you will no longer receive Bulletins, or be able to book on trips.

- **Cheques, payable to DBWPS can be sent to me at the address below.**
- **I will be at the meeting on 27th January and can take payment in cash.**
- **If you choose to renew by Bank Transfer, you *MUST* remember to make the transfer yourself - it will not happen automatically.**

Our bank details are: Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society

Sort Code: 30-98-97 Account number: 82228162

Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society - Officers & Committee 2024-2025

Chairman	Ken Cservenka	19 Overhill Road, Stratton, Cirencester GA7 2LG	01285 656480
Vice Chair	Roy Jellings	roy.jellings@aol.co.uk	01453 810176
Treasurer	Position Vacant		
Secretary	Simon Ashley	2 Victoria Villas, Spillmans Patch, Stroud GL5 3LU simonashley65@gmail.com	07825 668389
Outdoor programme			
IT & Communications			
Indoor Programme	Rebecca Paisey	crazypaisey@hotmail.com	01453 811408
Membership Secretary	Caroline Sandrey	15 Spey Close, Thornbury, Bristol, BS35 2NR caroline.sandrey@gmail.com	07972 125959
Bulletin Editor			
Bulletin Distribution			
Librarian	Position Vacant		
General Committee	Dot Jones, Peter Steele, Amanda Sultan-Black		



Secretary: simonashley65@gmail.com



www.dbwps.org.uk



@DursleyBirds



DursleyBirds



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING March 31st 2025

Election of Officers and Committee

DBWPS members wishing to serve (or seek election if more than one person is nominated for a particular role), must be duly proposed and seconded by members of the society and their signed application submitted on the form below, by post, by hand or as a signed and scanned e-mail attachment, to the Secretary, who must receive all nominations at least twenty eight days before the AGM (that is by 9th March). If a member wishes to nominate more than three people, please copy the form or apply to the Secretary for a second form. Elections, will be held at the AGM.

POSITION	NAME OF CANDIDATE	NAME OF PROPOSER	NAME OF SECONDER
	Signature of Candidate	Signature of Proposer	Signature of Seconder

POSITION	NAME OF CANDIDATE	NAME OF PROPOSER	NAME OF SECONDER
	Signature of Candidate	Signature of Proposer	Signature of Seconder

POSITION	NAME OF CANDIDATE	NAME OF PROPOSER	NAME OF SECONDER
	Signature of Candidate	Signature of Proposer	Signature of Seconder

SUBMISSION OF RESOLUTIONS

Any member who desires to move a resolution to alter the Constitution must ensure that the written text of the resolution is in the hands of the Secretary at least 21 days before the AGM. The Secretary is then required to give 14 days' notice of the proposed resolution to the members. It should be noted that no alteration to clauses 2, 10 or 11 can be made.

Any member who desires to move any other resolution at the AGM must ensure that the written text of the resolution is in the hands of the Secretary at least seven days before the AGM. Such resolutions may not be amended at the AGM except by unanimous approval.

DBWPS SECRETARY: Simon Ashley, 2 Victoria Villas, Spilman Patch, Stroud GL5 3LU. ✉ simonashley65@gmail.com

