



DURSLEY BIRDWATCHING AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

MARCH 2025



FROM YOUR CHAIR

Welcome to the March edition of the society Bulletin. We started off the New Year talks programme with an excellent talk on the wildlife of the Orkney Islands, presented by Philip Mugridge. As well as the high standard of wildlife photography, I was fascinated by the historical elements of his talk but more of this in the meeting report.

I was also able to attend the trip to the Somerset Levels, with Simon at the wheel some of us set off earlier than we needed to for the Starling murmuration so that we could take in a visit to Greylake before meeting at the Ring O Bells for a roast dinner. After our lunch we walked into the Ham Wall reserve where we found a few new species before heading into the Shapwick side and heading for Noah's hide where a Baikal teal had been spotted. The light by then was very gloomy so the birds were hard to pick out and we did not find the Teal. With a Bittern booming and a Water Rail squealing like a distressed pig not far from the path we headed back to the main track to wait for the Starling main event. The starlings were very distant at first but came closer later before dropping into the reed bed.

I am looking forward to the next indoor meeting on February 24th, Jackie Harris talking about all the WWT Reserves and what makes them all special. We also have some exciting field trips lined up in the next few months.

On Monday March 31 we hold our AGM, please note this is an evening meeting starting at 7.30 pm. We hope to see a big turn out for this important meeting.

Ken

Many members will remember Bettie Sloan and be sad to learn she died at home on 24 January; her funeral service will be at Westerleigh Crematorium on Monday 10 March at 11am.

I knew Bettie for about 20 years, through our membership of DBPS and St Mary's Church in Wotton, and she was a good friend, but a very private person. She was very involved with WWT Slimbridge as a volunteer, spending at least a couple of days there each week, and was often there first thing to admit early birders to gain access via the back gate.

Bettie had been deaf in one ear for many years, but it wasn't very noticeable because she always positioned herself so that she could hear her companion. In later life she had mobility problems that she bore with great courage and cheerfulness, and I feel guilty that I did not visit her as often as I could have done during her final months. Bettie was a member of Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society for many years until poor mobility meant attending trips and meetings became too difficult for her.

Anne Nuttall



INDOOR MEETING DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

31st March 7:30 - AGM

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

The meeting will be held at Dursley Community Centre, Rednock Drive, Dursley GL11 4BX

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

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. Path is fairly level, but may be muddy.

Cotswold Water Park

Leader: Ken Cservenka

Sunday 23rd March

Meeting time 9.30 at Lower Moor car park. We'll walk around the lakes there and then drive to Twitchers Gate and maybe Eysey if time allows. Parking is restricted at both sites so we will need to car share to those sites. We'll be hoping to see Red Crested Pochard and if we're lucky a Bittern or two.

Portland Bill

Leader: Simon Ashley

Sunday 6th April

For car share from Stroud meet at Cheapside car park at 7:00 am. Early start, but it should be worth it. We'll head straight down to the southerly promontory - looking out for early migrants such as Wheatear. There's also a good chance of seeing lingering winter visitors, such as Purple Sandpipers, Black Redstart, Rock Pipits and hopefully we'll see the resident Little Owls. We'll also visit the estuary scrapes at Ferry Bridge and finish off with a visit to Lodmoor or Radipole Lake. We plan to return by about 6:00 pm.

Cleeve Hill

Leader: t.b.c

Sunday 13th April - Further details to follow

Coombe Hill Meadow or Greenham Common

Leader: Simon Ashley

Sunday 27th April - details to be confirmed

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

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



MEETING REPORTS

Exploring the Wildlife of The Orkneys

Report from: **Ken Cservenka**

Monday 27th January

Our speaker **Philip Mugridge** gave us a most interesting talk illustrated with many stunning photographs. The Orkney Islands are a group of 70 islands with some of those in the south of the group linked by causeways. The Islands can be accessed by air or ferry. Helen and Phillip Mugridge spent a month there photographing the wildlife. As well as the mainland of Orkney they visited the islands of Westray, Papa Westray, Hoy and North and South Ronaldsay.

South Ronaldsay and the main island had a navigable channel leading to Scapa Flow and during October 1939 a German U-boat U-47 sneaked in over the sunken wrecks blocking the channel and sank a British Warship HMS Royal Oak, a ship well past its best as it was built in WW1. Following the intrusion by the U-boat four causeways (known as The Churchill Barriers) were built by Italian prisoners of war linking the Mainland with the islands of Lamb Holm, Glimps Holm, Burray and South Ronaldsay. Scapa Flow is popular with divers diving onto the wrecks. The islands are of historical importance with evidence of Neolithic people (Ring of Brodga stone circle), stone settlements (Scarab Brae) and standing stones (Standing Stones of Sleeness), some of which are free to visit and at others there is a charge.

The Italian prisoners of war that were sent to the Islands to work on the causeway asked if they could have their own church. This was granted and it was achieved by joining two Nissan huts end to end. The prisoners then set about building a suitable front entrance and decorated the interior with beautiful murals. One of the prisoners stayed after the end of the war to complete the paintings. Although there is now a charge for visiting the chapel, it is still used as a place of worship.



© Philip Mugridge



Short-eared Owls are plentiful enough throughout the Islands but only one presented itself on a post to allow a stunning photograph, likewise there was a hide for viewing Hen Harriers but again they were too far away for photography as were the Red-throated Divers located on the Island of Hoy. Curlew are plentiful and the dominant species of gull are Common Gull though Herring, Lesser black-backed and Great Black-backed were also present. Great Skua (Bonxie) can also be seen here.

Arctic Tern were photographed on the top of a small island just off shore and beautiful photographs of this attractive species in flight were shown.



Agriculture is evident on the islands with pasture as well as crops being farmed. The farmland produced Pied Wagtail, Wheatear, Skylark, Stonechat, Linnet and Twite. On the coastal cliffs, Guillemot, some of which are the bridled variety and Razorbill nest on the ledges as do Fulmar. Puffins were present nesting on a wide sea stack. **Arctic Skua** were seen patrolling along the ledges. There are Kittiwake nest sites and in one location cliff nesting Gannets. Oystercatcher and Eider were nesting above the tide line in suitable locations. A colony of Sand Martin was found nesting in a sandy bank, and Black Guillemot can be found all around the rocky coastline where they nest in holes and crevices.



Stoat were discovered on the islands and soon multiplied to become a threat to the indigenous Orkney Vole and ground nesting birds. Efforts to trap and remove them are now underway. Other mammals include both Brown and Mountain Hare and an Otter was observed raiding a Tern colony for eggs. On the coast Common or Harbour Seals are present and the Grey Seal is less common here. An unfortunate dead Sperm Whale was seen washed up on the beach.

In the early 1830s a wall was built around North Ronaldsay to keep the good pasture land for cattle, thereby leaving the sheep to reside on the seaward side, so their diet consists mainly of seaweed, giving the meat a salty flavour.

Botanical interest included a patch of Spring Squill, roadside patches of Orchids and the diminutive Scottish Primrose. The tops of the coastal cliffs were adorned with Thrift.

Wetland and Wildfowl Trust Sites

Report: **Ken Cservenka**

Monday 24th February

Jackie Harris initially started working with WWT as a Project Manager supported with Lottery funding - when the funding ceased, she just carried on as a volunteer. Jackie gave us a short introduction to WWT and a flavour of each of the sites, including any 'special' birds that can be seen. Jackie started her talk by saying that 40% of all life on earth are at the wetlands but added that 90% of wetland habitat has been lost.

The aim of WWT is to inspire the restoration of wetlands so that they thrive for the benefit of their biodiversity and the wellbeing of those involved and the visitors at their many sites both in the United Kingdom and world wide.

Arundel was established in 1976 and is one of the smaller sites being only 25ha. The site is fed by a chalk stream and supports interesting species including Marsh Harrier, Bittern, Cetti's Warbler and Savi's Warbler. The star exhibit in their collection is the impressive Dalmatian Pelican.

Caerlaverock on the Solway Coast in South-west Scotland is a large wild site of 740ha established in 1970. It is an important wintering site for the Svalbard flock of the Barnacle Goose whose population increased from 300 in the 60s to an amazing 38,000 in the 2020s. Sadly almost a third were lost with Avian Influenza, but it is hoped that numbers will recover. Pink-footed Goose and 45 other species are also seen here.



Castle Espie was established in 1990 and is a reserve on the shore of Strangford Lough in Northern Ireland. It is a Ramsar site and is the wintering site for up to 26,000 Pale-bellied Brent Goose (90% of the world population!). It is also a good site for Bar-tailed Godwit.

Llanelli in South Wales was established in 1991 and is a site of 280 ha. It has a good area of Salt Marsh of which the United Kingdom holds 12% of the world total. It has a total bird list of 200 species and is an important site for Water Vole.

London Wetland Centre was established in 1989 not long after the WWT founder Sir Peter Scott had passed away. The site has been transformed and reclaimed from the original four Victorian reservoirs. One of the planning restrictions was that none of the concrete from the reservoirs was to be removed from the area and it has been reused throughout the site. It is an important green area near to central London and 206 species were recorded within 2 years of opening, including important numbers of Shoveler and Gadwall. It also boasts a list of 19 butterfly species and features a man-made Sand Martin bank.

Martin Mere is a site of 240ha situated in the North-west of England and was established in 1975. It has recorded 150 species of which 35 species breed on site. It holds good numbers of Whooper Swan, Pink-footed Goose and Pintail during the winter months.

Slimbridge the first of WWT sites, covers an area of 372ha and was established in 1946 and now boasts 250,000 visitors annually. It was chosen by Peter Scott as a good place to set up a reserve as two Lesser White-fronted Geese had been recorded there. The large flock of White-fronted Geese is now down to a few hundred birds as they don't need to travel further than the Netherlands due to our warmer climate. It is a good place to see Bewick's Swan all of which can be identified by the pattern on their bill. Sadly a fewer number were recorded this year. A recent success story has been the re-introduction of the Common Crane after a successful breeding programme and of the Cranes released in Somerset, 14 flew back to Slimbridge - back in fact to 'their' field and most have remained. A small number of un-ringed adult birds are now seen on site.

Stewart Marshes was established in 2014 and covers 734ha plus a large area of Bridgwater Bay. It holds 34 breeding species and large flocks of wintering wildfowl and waders. Stewart which is open and free to visitors, is an important area of salt marsh recreated by managed flooding and provides flood defence for the local area. As well as habitat for a variety of wildlife, (530 species have been recorded) the marshes are also able to trap and store carbon.

Washington is a small reserve of 36ha and was established in 1975. It holds good numbers of Curlew and Grey Heron and is the most northerly site in the UK for Avocet.

Welney is an area of the Ouse Washes and was established in 1970. It is an important reserve for Bewick's and Whooper Swan, and Corncrake. They have also been head-starting Black-tailed Godwit to establish a breeding ground for them.

Cambodia and Madagascar Reserves have been created in both countries with the co-operation of the local population. In Cambodia the focus is on the Sarus Crane population in the Mekong Delta. In Madagascar the very small population of Madagascar Pochard has been steadily increasing from just a handful of birds on Lake Sofia and at the last count were around 34 birds.

Jackie also mentioned that although visitors are important to WWT, they are not as important as the birds and other wildlife. Visitors may find that some hides or parts of a site are closed at certain times in order for example, to protect nesting or breeding birds.



TRIP REPORTS

Somerset Levels & Starling Roost

Report: Jean Walker

Sunday 9th February

Andrew and I rejoined Dursley Birders this month after a long break during Covid. We were so pleased to be back and even more pleased to be going on our first trip to Somerset to see the starlings. To my surprise there were 17 people in the group, everyone was so friendly and welcoming. It's wonderful to be birdwatching with so many knowledgeable birders who even let us look at close up shots with their scopes. We saw some lovely birds - Andrew even spotted a Goldcrest bobbing about in a low hedge close to the footpath. We had good views of a Great White Egrets, several Great Crested Grebes and a Marsh Harrier, both in flight and resting in the top of a bush across the lake. Several pairs of breeding Herons in the reed beds were our reward for rather a muddy walk out to the Tor View Hide. Even though it was overcast the starling display was spectacular. It's really nice to be back as a member.

Bird list: From Simon Ashley - Siskin, Pied Wagtail, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Goldcrest Long-Tailed Tit, Carrion Crow, Little Egret, Cormorant, Black-headed Gull, Coot, Water Rail, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Pintail, Gadwall, Reed Bunting, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Wren, House Sparrow, Dunnock, Robin, Cetti's Warbler, Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Jackdaw, Magpie, Buzzard, Marsh Harrier, Grey Heron, Great White Egret, Snipe, Lapwing, Moorhen, Great Crested Grebe, Woodpigeon, Teal, Mallard, Wigeon, Shoveler, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Merlin, Kingfisher, Bittern (Heard)

FROM OUR MEMBERS

Nurture Nature Notes - Otis Tarda

In the light of the devastating fires around and in Los Angeles, California, fanned by hurricane force winds - we think of the human cost in lives, injuries and property destruction. Let us also realise the terrible destruction of forests, woods and vegetation taking place. With so much habitat loss the environmental damage will have devastated wildlife species too. It is doubtful whether many species could have survived.

It's good to see and hear on the Radio and TV more attention being given to Nature and the ever increasing problems around the world with declining habitats, declining species, many birds and animals worldwide on Red Lists and one species in eight threatened with extinction by 2032. More frequent storms and droughts are creating mass migration of peoples on all the populated continents. It is reported that we humans are to blame for these changes, no doubt with recent pronouncements from OPEC world leaders these events will get worse. Scientific studies worldwide are warning about the rising temperatures and scientists internationally are warning that global warming will continue. As readers follow the news worldwide you will draw your own conclusions.

The above has only touched on biodiversity loss. Still, should you wish to get away from it all here's quite a nice job advert: "Wanted, Ranger for remote island three miles off the West coast of Scotland. Applicants should have a good sense of humour". There has been no full time human inhabitant since 1843. Over the summer Handa is home to over 100,000 birds, including Fulmars, Guillemots and Kittiwakes, and a smaller number of Puffins and Arctic Skuas. Off shore, whales, seals and dolphins are often seen. There's a caveat to this exciting job advertised by the Scottish Wildlife Trust - that the successful applicants must take with them at least enough food for two weeks minimum. Well, if they run out they could always have a cliff nesting sea bird's egg for tea, Now Now!! - as the inhabitants of Hebridean islanders had as a main source of food in earlier centuries.



Now, a call to the female of the species, this time of the human kind, for more women to become ringers (no, not wringing necks - ringing bird legs). Details on the BTO website.

Some of you will have been taking part in the The RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch 24th - 26th January. The results will be interesting as to which species are surviving the increasing pressures due to changing climate patterns and which are suffering further decline. Details of both are on the Web. Annual winter migrations from Scandinavia appear to be fewer this winter. We have seen fewer fieldfares, redwings, and starlings, so it will be interesting to see the big picture throughout the British Isles when published. For those readers taking part remember to submit your records by the due dates.

Also submit your data to the local county websites, details of two are at the end of this article.



Redwing



Red Squirrel seen on DBWPS trip to Brownsea Island

Should you be holidaying in Wales this year and have never seen a red squirrel go to Plas Newydd on the wooded shores of Anglesey and you could be lucky. (Note: the writer has only ever seen one red squirrel in the British Isles in a wood at Kingsley Green on the Surrey/Sussex border at the end of the Second World War in 1945.) the Web.

Some readers might listen to Tweet of the Week on BBC Radio 4 just before the 9a.m. News on Sunday mornings.

Recently, crossbills were featured. There is the Scottish Crossbill, (*Loxia scottica*) mainly confined to the Caledonian pine woodlands. There is also a slightly smaller

species (*Loxia curvirostra* - 15 cm) found in Southern England, for which the New Forest is a known location. Both have heavy distinctive beaks. When the nestlings hatch, the bills are straight, however, around twenty seven days, the upper mandible grows either left or right. So when they become fledglings and adults they are able to prise out the seeds of mainly Scots pine cones, the prime source of their diet.

The Royal Mail is bringing out a special issue on March 11th about Garden Wildlife. Apart from the stamps, the info sheet should be of interest. We must keep encouraging our children and future generations to be Guardians of our planet.

Finally, should one have a large nest egg, come into a big inheritance, won the pools (do they still exist?), won a major lottery prize, consider joining Bird Life International's 'Millionaires' Club - The Rare Bird Club, subscription £5,000 per annum! This moneyed Club does great conservation work around the world, especially for rare and declining species, details on the Web.

Don't forget to log your sightings. wiltshirebirds.co.uk and glos.bird.recorder@gmail.com.



THANK YOU

Thank you to Otis Tarda, Jean Walker, Anne Nuttal and Ken Cservenka for their contributions this month.

Many thanks to Philip Mugridge for allowing us to include his beautiful photos of the Arctic Tern and Arctic Skua in Ken's report of his talk on 27th January.

A good number of members (almost a third of our current membership), attended the meeting on 24th February to hear about what makes each WWT site special.

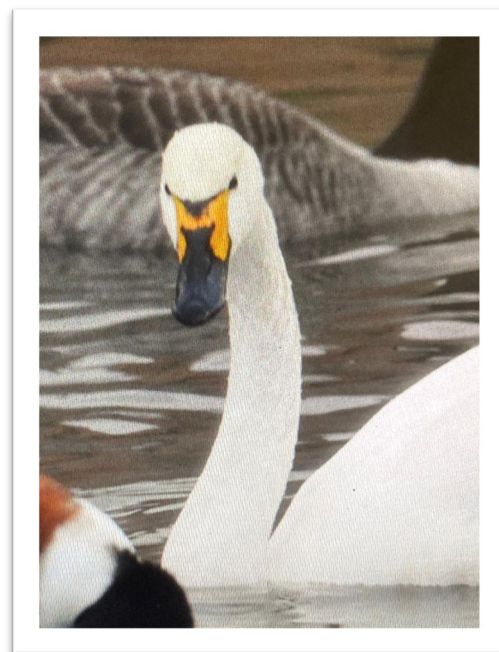
Please think about sharing any items of news you have, or birds you have seen - Send any articles or photographs for the next bulletin **by 15th of the month** to me by email

caroline.sandrey@gmail.com or by post to me at the address below.

CMS

Meet Bettie

This Bewick's female is now named Bettie Sloane, she arrived at Slimbridge on 20th December 2024 and was caught in January. (White ring BXI)



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 (Acting)	Mike Tranter		
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



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Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society

Minutes of 71st Annual General Meeting

Held on Monday 11th March 2024 -
At Dursley Community Centre 7.45pm start.
Minutes

1) Present:-

Ken Cservenka (Vice Chair), Mary Cservenka, Roy Jellings, Alan Keith (Com), Sheila LaPorta, Roland LaPorta, Caroline Sandrey (mem Sec), Clive Sandrey, Barbara Wood, David Wood (Tres), Rebecca Paisey Com), Colin Greenfield, Amanda Sultan-Black (Com), Tony Johnson, Yvonne Johnson, Dot Jones (Com), Roberta Goodall, Mike Tranter

2) Apologies – No Apologies.

3) Minutes of 2023 AGM – Circulated with the Bulletin

4) Matters arising from these minutes.

None

5) Annual Report– AGM 2023 -

It is your society, run for your benefit so please support us in 2024-2025 Also our membership has remained at a low of 91 so we are asking you the members once again to ask friends and neighbours if they would like to join or come to a meeting to see if they could enjoy what we have to offer.

On the bright side the weather will improve, and we can enjoy our birdwatching and other events and hopefully we can implement any ideas which I am sure you have to help the club progress.

Thank You

Michael Robinson – Chairman.

6) Statement of Accounts

The Treasurer, David Wood, presented his review of the accounts in the March bulletin, (2024) Limited copies of the auditors certified review of accounts for the year ended 31st December 2024 were available at the AGM. The treasurer will present his annual report (in earlier section of the Bulletin).

Club made a profit of just over £400, - From film evening / Reduction /

Bank statement at Dec 31st £11,4671.41 showing a stable position with very large reserve.

7) Minutes and Actions of meeting of previous year and Accounts

Proposed by: Roberta Goodall Seconded by: Dot Jones

8) Membership Report

Membership Secretary, Caroline Sandrey has provided a report of the current Membership, summarised as 59 memberships with a total of 89 members (last year 128), around 20 have not renewed. Membership can be done by SO / Bank Transfer / Cheque / Cash

9) Election of Officers and Committee – The Chairman stated that written nominations have been received for the following officer and committee positions and have proposers and seconders by March as required by the constitution 6vi.

Resolutions have been given to the Secretary.

As we have the required nominees unless there are any objections, we will accept a proposer and seconder. We will be grateful if anyone else would like to be co-opted.

- Voted on block: **Proposed by:** Roberta Goodall **Seconded by:** Colin Greenfield **Vote Carried**



Position	Candidate	Proposer	Seconded
Chair	Ken Cservenka	Roy Jelling	Dot Jones
Vice Chair	Roy Jellings	Amanda- Sultan-Black	Simon Ashley
Secretary	Simon Ashley		
Treasurer	David Wood		
Committee	Dorothy Jones		
Committee	Alan Keith		
Committee	Rebecca Paisey		
Committee	Amanda Sultan-Black		
Programme Secretary Outdoors Indoors	Simon Ashley Rebecca Paisey		
Membership Secretary	Caroline Sandrey		
Bulletin Distribution			
Bulletin Editor	Caroline Sandrey	Roberta Goodall	Amanda Sultan-Black
Librarian	Required		
IT & Comms	Simon Ashley		

9) Special Business –

- Printing of Bulletins – We made need a new printer (as old one is very expensive on inks)
- Agreed to an award of £250 towards cost of Projector
- Proposal from Rebecca that we try some meetings – as online. To supplement the 6 per year
- Disbursement of our funds. We are a small society with annual operating turnover below £1000. We currently have over £11,500 in our bank account. The charity commission gives some guidance on the level of reserves that a charity should carry: Typical values range from 3-6 months reserves to 2 years. We currently have over 10 years.
Therefore, I'd like to propose that we disburse the excess to a number of worthy causes that would benefit from the money that we have – rather than it sitting and losing value in our bank account that offers no interest.
To this end the committee would like to receive ideas for potential donations that align with the aims of our society. We should aim to reduce the amount in our bank account by £8,000 over the next 24 months. Use the Wader quest as model for disbursement
Proposal that the committee offers donations of up to £500 to local charities in line with the organisations aims

Motion Ken Cservenka **Proposed by:** Roberta Goodall **Seconded by:** Rebecca Paisey

10) Any Other Ordinary Business

- Trips –The cheapest method is probably by car share so we will only be able to run selected longer trips if enough members put their names down to cover costs.
- Minibus: ie Gloucester Minibus trips – Self drive / Revisit Would need 3 members to drive
- Raised a vote of thanks to Mike Robinson for his thanks and dedication for the tens of years of service to the club.

11) Meeting Closed – Thank you for coming.

