



**Fylde  
Bird Club**

**LANCASHIRE**

Chairman: Mr.L.G.Blacow

Secretary: Mr.P.Ellis  
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## **FROM THE CHAIR**

### **Bird Club 2000**

Pick up any magazine or journal and somewhere there will be mention of the millennium.

What's your vision of Bird Club 2000? Haven't got one? Then let's share one;

At the March 2000 meeting we welcome our one hundredth member. Part of their membership pack contains a copy of our Breeding Bird Survey, details of our reserve at Moss Side, a key for Rossall Coastguard and a copy of the latest Fylde Bird Report.

Our new member flicks through the bird report, the systematic list contains accounts of our local birds, sparrows and all. There are reports from the Marton Mere and Moss Side reserves. A summary of the wader counts and site guides to our best patches.

Hmm, think our new members, what a lively society, members recording and reporting, looking after our birds and their habitats. Glad I joined, now where can I help?

That's my vision of 2000, what's yours?

**LGB**

## From The Editor

This is the 2nd newsletter, edited by myself and I trust you will all find something of interest in it. Reaction to the February one seemed generally favourable whilst the inclusion of Committee Meeting minutes keeps members up to date with what is going on behind the scenes and helps to prove that these meetings are not held just so that our Chairman and Secretary can consume copious quantities of ale. At our last Committee meeting it was also decided that we should include the minutes from the last business meeting in the Newsletter. This will 'enable members who cannot always get to meetings to be informed of the work the club is doing. One or two articles are included in this issue and I would like to thank Chris Hawkins for his two excellent articles. Chris is a relatively new member and I think he has proved that anyone should not be afraid to have a go. So come on keep the articles pouring in. Meantime many thanks to all those who have contributed to the members sightings.

**AJH**

## FEBRUARY SIGHTINGS

After very little rain in January, February was very wet with strong south westerly and westerly winds and only the odd calm, sunny day.

49 Great Crested Grebes were off Starr Gate on the 2nd and 118 Red Throated Divers flew south on the same day. A Fulmar was seen off South Promenade on the 18th with 3 Gannets. The Bittern was seen again at the Mere on the 12th.

54 Whooper Swans were still at Rawcliffe on the 9th and good numbers of geese were over Wyre. On the 16th at least 12,000 were noted between Fleetwood and Thurnham and amongst them were 9 Barnacles and 1 Bean. The Black Brant was still at Pilling until the 24th. A female Smew was seen again at the Mere on the 7th with a male Scaup there on the 23rd. 255 Common Scoter were off Starr Gate on the 16th, a big increase on previous numbers this winter. On the 23rd there were 20 Shoveler, 15 Tufted Duck, 9 Pochard and a mall Pintail on Wilkinson Gravel Pits at Preesall. 1000 Pintail were at Lytham Creek on the 2nd confirming the recent dramatic increase on the Ribble.

Sparrowhawkes were reported over Mythop Road on the 3rd and at Royal Lytham Golf Club on the 19th. A Buzzard was at Lytham hall on the 7th whilst a Merlin chased Pied Wagtails at British Aerospace, Warton on the 28th. 3 pairs of Grey Partridge were on Lytham Moss on the 15th, an area where this declining species can still be seen regularly. The Kentish Plover continued to be seen at Rossall up to the 23rd with a Purple Sandpiper there on the 16th.

Little Gulls were seen on a number of occasions off South Promenade with 6 there on the 15th, 12 on the 16th and 57 on the 19th. Med Gulls were reported at Blackpool Promenade and St Annes Beach around the middle of the month and a 1st Winter Iceland Gull put in a very brief appearance at the Mere on the 23rd. 35 Kittiwakes were recorded off South Promenade on the 18th in a South Westerly gale. A further adult winter Med Gull was at Fairhaven lake on the 22nd. Short-Eared Owls were reported behind British Aerospace on the 15th, while 1 lingered at the Mere until 23rd. Barn Owls were at Mythop Road on the 14th and the Mere on the 23rd with 2 Little Owls on the East Barn roof at the Mere the same day.

A female Stonechat was at Lytham Moss on the 15th. 2 Female type Black Redstarts were seen on a number of occasions between Knott End and Fluke Hall at the beginning of the month and the elusive Black Red at the Thursby Home, St Annes was seen again on the 19th. 29 Red Wings were in Witch Wood, Lytham on the 16th. 66 Corn Buntings were on Lytham Moss on the 15th whilst Snow Buntings continued to be seen with 6 at Rossall on 25th and 7 at Fairhaven on the 22nd.

## MARCH SIGHTINGS

The first part of the month was mainly dry with sunny periods and a few early migrants were noted. However, it turned cooler towards the month end with stronger winds from a Westerly direct with no large movements of migrants. In contrast to the previous month there was again very little rain.

On the 7th there were 42 Red Throated Divers off South Promenade. A welcome sight was a Little Grebe on the Mere on the 7th with another noted on the 9th. A freshly dead Gannet was picked up at Fairhaven on the 15th. Also on the 15th there were 15 occupied Grey Heron nests on the island at Stanley Park whilst the Bittern was last seen at the Mere on the 8th.

16 Whooper Swans were still at Freckleton on the 23rd. A Snow Goose was seen with Pink Feet over Wyre at various locations until the end of the month at least. 3000 Pink Feet plus the Snow Goose and 1 Barnacle were at Bonds Farm on the 2nd with 400 Pinkies, the Snow Goose, 1 Greenland Whitefront and 4 Barnacles there on the 7th. A Russian Whitefront was seen near Cogie Hill on the 2nd. A male Gadwall was at Pulling Lane End Ports on the 21st of the month. Shoveler peaked at 35 on the 20th at Wilkinsons Gravel Pits with a male Pintail at the same site on the 14th. An oiled and "poorly" Common Scoter was on the island at Fleetwood Marine Lake on the 16th. At the Mere, Goldeneye numbers reached 37 on the 16th whilst the female Snew was noted there early in the month and also on Stanley Park Lake. On the 15th, 3 Red Breasted Mergansers were also on the Mere.

Only a few sightings of Raptors were reported. A Sparrowhawk was noted frightening 30 Fieldfares at Hackensall Wood on the 9th whilst here was one in a garden on Pedders Lane, Blackpool the same week. A Buzzard was reported at Lytham Crematorium around the middle of the month and a Merlin was seen on the golf course at Herons Reach on the 26th.

5 pairs of Grey Partridge were near Freckleton Sewage Works on the 15th. The last report of the Kentish Plover received was at Rossall on the 1st whilst on the 9th a Green Sandpiper was seen at Newton Pools. 180 Black Tailed Godwits were at Stanah on the 19th with c400 there on the 25th. Med Gulls continued to put in appearances at the Mere with an adult Sumner on the 9th, on the 15th and 3 on the 16th. 2 adult Sumners were also on the Wyre at Shard Bridge on the 16th. On the 7th a good record was 20 Stock Dove near Bonds Farm Wyre.

The resident pair of Little Owls were regularly seen early in the month on the woodpile near Eagland Hill whilst a lone Short-eared was seen at the Mere on the 4th and 8th. A Barn Owl found on the embankment on the 17th appeared to have been dead for some time. 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers were at Hackensall Wood on the 9th and what appears to have been the first Sand Martin locally was noted on the 11th over Clifton Garden Centre. Chiffchaffs

were singing at the Mere from about the 9th with one in a garden at Staining on the 15th. Just outside our area at least 2 were at Scorton Picnic Site on the 13th with several there a couple of days later. 2 Goldcrest were at Stanah on the 2nd. The first Wheatears were 2 at Rossall on the 8th with 1 at Fairhaven the same day. Another was at Rossall School on the 15th. The Mere had two on the golf course on the 12th. A pair of Stonechat at Stanah on the 2nd was a good record. The Black Redstart put in another brief appearance opposite the nature reserve at St Annes on the 10th whilst an easterly movement of Redwings and Meadow Pipits was noted around the 17th.

Nuthatches have moved into our area in recent years and 2 were seen at Hackensall Wood on the 9th. 4 Snow Buntings were still at Rossall on the 8th whilst 70 Twite were still present at Fluke Hall up to the 12th at least. A notable record was of 12 Siskins in Ashton Gardens, St Annes in the second week of the month. Jays are gradually becoming more common in the Fylde and one was noted at Freckleton on the 23rd

**AJH**

## WEBS : An introduction to the pleasures of Wetland Bird counting.

In 1947, a wildfowl counting scheme was established to determine the numbers of species in Britain. At that time there was no statutory protection for wildfowl, and no laws that safeguarded wetland habitats. In 1954, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust became responsible for the counts, which later became the International Waterfowl Census. The counts were gradually being used as a way of not just totalling the numbers and distribution of waders and wildfowl, but also to assess and recognise the importance of wetlands. By 1992, an all-encompassing scheme called the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBs) was initiated, and heralded a new dawn for the continued protection of wetland birds.

...At Fluke Hall, on Sunday 12th January, the morning was peacefully mild, with a south-westerly breeze that was almost warm after the recent cold easterlies. All we could hear was the wonderfully enchanting sound of Pink Footed Geese, masses of these winter residents, resting on the coastal fields. Jean Roberts from Lancaster, an experienced wetland bird-count volunteer, arrived and asked whether we were going to the "Webs count" at Lane Ends. We indicated we would be there shortly. Due to recent severe weather with waters frozen, and food supplies limited, a Wildfowling Ban had been issued to not shoot the geese, but as we left Fluke Hall, we realised that the steely cold determination of the Wildfowler's character was sadly un-changed. In a farmer's field, guns were firing at the sky-full's of over-flying Pink Feet, the birds maintaining a high altitude, out-witting the poor aim of the Wildfowler's pursuit.

We arrived at the small car-park, where we met other WEBS counters, all ready with notebooks and sharpened pencils, battle plans and mental objectives. No computerised technology to count the birds, just a keen and sharp eye, adequate recognition skills, a military "Jizz" aptitude, and many fingers and thumbs. The high tide was for 1.30 and it was to be 10 metres or 33 feet high, so we were expecting to see lots of birds. Just before we set off, we were shown a small group of Dark-bellied Brent Geese and the rare Black Brant goose which had flown in recently. The Pilling marshes are devoid of Eel grass (*Zostera Marina*) but the habitat surprisingly seems to attract them. Jean was to be our leader, and with the spirit of a good teacher, we were soon being shown the way. It took us about an hour to reach our designated spot. Our section was to be no further than the Bank End fence line. From the embankment, Jean looked through her telescope, I used my bins, and Mike sketched the tranquil scene. Beyond the tide-line, a flotilla of thirty-five Whooper Swans cruised peacefully over the waves, ghostly white apparitions crossing a watery sea-scape. The quickly rising tide was clear to see. Morecambe Bay was filling up, millions of tidal gallons, flooding the saltmarsh and sea-washed turf. We started to count the birds out on the saltmarsh. ...Sixty boldly white conspicuous Shelduck, sifting for hydrobia snails....twenty alarmed Redshank flying as if in a permanent state of panic.... forty-five medium-sized Knot, shooting past with jet-propelled flocks of two hundred Dunlin, almost skimming across the surface of the incoming tide...

On the embankment slope, we found a victim of the Wildfowler's gun. A dead Pink Foot was un-ringed, but not un-injured. The Pink Foot is perhaps the most attractive of the grey geese, and as we studied the almost rosy pink chest and distinctive pink feet, we realised that this *Anser Brachyrhynchus* would sadly not be returning to its Iceland home. Suddenly, a mass of three hundred Oystercatcher flew in towards us to find a seemingly safe sanctuary away from the rising tide, on a stretch of exposed mud. More birds came our way, to add to this natural tally, a peaceful bagging, with no distress or harm, to either ourselves or to the birds. Birds seemed to be everywhere. Curlews and Grey Plover joined the spectacle. Long necked elegant Pintail flew across our view. As the tide rose even higher, we looked towards Lane Ends to see hundreds, if not thousands, of grouping Oystercatcher, assembling on the embankment slope, a black mass of highly nervous waders, trying to find a space to rest until the tide ebbed. Jean wanted to accurately estimate this huge flock of perhaps 3000 birds but if we walked along the embankment top, the birds would surely fly away. So we had a cunning plan. We would creep up alongside on the inner track, then gingerly crawl to the top of the embankment to view the massed flock. In former times, we would have fixed bayonets to scramble up a slope, to go "over the top". On this occasion, non-surprise was our tactic, non-disturbance was our aim, with a peaceful plan to see our natural objective. As we peered over the top, a few Oystercatcher took off but the rest stayed, and we marvelled at this view of wild birds at such a close range.

As I viewed a spectacular flock of three hundred Bar-tailed Godwit, fifty-eight Knot, and a few Grey Plover, I realised that in a few weeks time, the annual shooting season would end, the Wildfowlers would leave, peace at last would prevail on the Over Wyre mosslands, and the "Webs volunteers" would return for more counting of wetland birds...

Chris Hawkins

## Hackensall : A Wildwood in the Fylde

An early morning walk at Hackensall Wood can be an uplifting experience. Entering this unique natural environment, is an introduction to a wild unmanaged woodland, a peaceful timeless place, where imagination can create colourful visions of perhaps how a Wildwood in the Fylde used to be. I first became aware of this precious habitat last January, on a walk south from Knott End. It is an eleven acre site of towering mature beech, ivy-clad oak and sycamore, holly and alder. The understorey is dense and overgrown, the bramble and rhododendron providing home, shelter and security for many different birds. The old Hackensall Hall stands derelict and neglected, its farm-house and buildings alone and almost ruinous. It is as if it does not want to divulge its past, or share its memories of past-times it has witnessed.

On Sunday the 9th March, I was returning to Hackensall for a special and memorable visit. It was just after eight o'clock, on a frosty and misty morning as we parked the car at the end of Hackensall road, and walked along the stoney track which leads towards the Hall and woodland. We were actually on our way to take part in the monthly Webs Wader count at Lane Ends, Pilling, and were surprised to hear the familiar call of over-flying Pink Footed Geese. We looked upwards through the branches of the skeletal trees, the buds an early indication that Spring was on its way, but we could not see any geese in flight. Continuing along the track, a Great Tit sang a loud and piercing call, as it attempted to possibly attract an early female, or designate a chosen territory. Suddenly over to our right across the rough meadow, a Great Spotted Woodpecker flew up to an out-stretched, welcoming outer branch. One of our group had not seen a *Dendrocopus major* before and he was quite thrilled to see this beautifully marked, pied woodpecker, with distinct crimson nape-patch which indicated that it was a male.

It was Mother's Day, and as the misty sun rose slowly above the outlying fields, and with the Pink Footed geese continuing to graze on the wet grassland, was Mother Nature herself, greeting her own day ? We met a fellow morning traveller, who was a fellow birder, quiet, unassuming, contented with watching the many calling Great Tit, the abundant Blue Tit, the Robins that were singing their territorial cascade of song. He told us he regularly came to this part of the Fylde, to escape the industrial heartland which was Bolton and Manchester, to find solace in the countryside on the banks of the Wyre. He had a caravan on a nearby site and had walked here with his loyal and obedient dog, his tried and tested binoculars held firm around his neck. The geese were calling again. As another group landed, the scene was comparable to an animated Peter Scott watercolour, the same shapes and tones in this atmospheric setting. Amongst the flock of two hundred or so, was a lonely white goose, which was confirmed later as being the Snow Goose reported by the Birdline network. We later met a group of "Twitchers" who were fanatically trying to find this elusive northern goose, and we confessed to having seen it without the use of any pager or technological bird-finding gadget.

The geese took off, the commotion upsetting a flock of Fieldfare, which flew above the trees to land on the very top of a majestic beech, the branches exposed, and bathed in warming sunlight. Through our binoculars, we could see the thirty or so of these winter thrushes, resting themselves in the golden glow, their plumage striking and colourful, so different to the drabness of the Starlings that shared the same branches. Lower down, a group of three Long Tailed Tits acrobatically hung on to flimsy branches, their ultra-light weight putting no strain on these lightest of tree endings.

I had reported last year the sighting of two Nuthatch, which are uncommon in the Fylde, due to a lack of mature woodland. As we stood and listened to one of the most emotive of woodland sounds, the distant drumming of Great Spotted Woodpeckers, in rapid abrupt bursts, we heard a quieter and much nearer tapping and hammering, and looked directly above us to see the energetic antics of the resident pair of Nuthatch. The two birds were literally climbing in all directions, up and down and even upside down. What confident tree-climbers they are.

Tawny Owls nest here in specially installed boxes, and Little Owls pay regular visits. I have seen Sparrow-hawks circling above the trees, and Jays frequent the upper canopy. Tree-creepers can be seen if you are patient. All these birds are indicators of a living woodland environment.

The Hall and farm were sold in the Autumn of last year, to two separate interested parties, after being empty for nearly five years. There are plans to redevelop the farm into living units, and the ancient manor house and outbuildings may see changes in the years to follow. Will the surrounding woodland habitat be changed or left in its wild state ? My only hope is that this woodland continues its natural succession back to the Wildwood from whence it came. Only time will tell.

Chris Hawkins.



**Fylde  
Bird Club  
LANCASHIRE**

## FYLDE BIRD CLUB COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 8:15 PM ON WEDNESDAY THE 22ND OF JANUARY AT THE EAGLE'S HEAD AT OVER KELLET

#### Present

Chairman; Secretary; Treasurer; Alan Hinchliffe; Paul Slade; Alan Dawe; Dave Pitman and Andrew Cadman.

#### Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 27th November were read and approved.

#### Matters Arising

##### 1) Breeding Birds Survey

Andrew Cadman distributed copies of a sample page of the proposed publication. It was agreed that, A4 format with a plastic spine and one species per page would be an appropriate format. Andrew has no word processing facilities and so it was agreed that a volunteer typist should be sought with access to a computer. The Chairman stated that he would issue a request at the next Club meeting and make other attempts to find a volunteer. Andrew will continue with the compilation of the report in hand written form, ready to be typed.

**Action continuing : Andrew Cadman/Chairman**

##### 2) Rossall Coast Guards Tower

The Chairman reported that Fylde Borough Councillors had enquired as to why nothing has happened and that this may spur the project on. He reported that W.B.C. would underwrite the running of the building and hopefully its future would be secured by the end of the financial year.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the shipping transponder had been removed from the building.

**Action: Chairman to keep the Committee informed of developments.**

##### 3) Marton Mere

There has still been no progress with getting the hide enhancement materials delivered to the Mere. The Chairman reported that he had contacted Geoff Wilby of Warings in an attempt to get things moving but that still nothing had happened. He reported that doubts over the feasibility of storing the materials at the Mere, were an obstacle.

The Chairman offered to contact Geoff Wilby again and Dave Mc.Grath in another attempt to resolve the issue.

**Action continuing: Chairman to contact Geoff Wilby and Dave Mc.Grath.**

Post meeting note : the materials have now been delivered to the Mere.

##### 4) 1994 Fylde Bird Report

The 15 copies of the '94 Report held by Paul Slade had been handed over to the Chairman for sale at Stannah.

**Action: Complete**



Paul Slade reported that monies from sales of the '94 report at Fairhaven would be paid when the Scheme re-opened later in the year.

**Action: Transferred to Treasurer to secure payment from the RSPB for sales of '94 Reports and return of unsold old reports.**

The Secretary reported that he had been unsuccessful in securing any further advertisements for the '95 report.

Action complete

The Treasurer reported that Integrated Energy Systems had paid the Club for their 'advert in the 94 Report.

Action complete

It was agreed that in future, the Bird Report should contain rates for advertisements and contact details for the Club.

#### 5) 1997 Meeting Programme

The Meeting Programme had been available at the AGM. Action complete

Alan Hinchliffe offered to ask the Bird Report printers for a quote to produce some 1997 Programme cards.

**Action: Alan Hinchliffe**

#### 6) New Club Logo

The Chairman had not yet received any replies from his enquiries with printers about a Car Sticker featuring the new logo. He agreed to pursue the matter.

**Action continuing: Chairman**

A photocopy of the logo had been provided to the Secretary and he had used it to produce some temporary headed note paper. He had also incorporated it on the 1997 Programme.

Action complete

#### 7) Newsletter

Production of the Newsletter was discussed. Alan Dawe stated that he would require two weeks to get it typed and copied, Alan Hinchliffe stated that this would not present a problem. Alan Hinchliffe was asked if he had received sufficient copy for the forthcoming issue, he replied that he had. It was agreed that the committee's minutes should be included in the newsletter. The Chairman agreed to provide copies of existing site guides, for inclusion in future issues.

**Action: Chairman - site guides.**

#### 9) Moss Edge Land Offer – See Agenda.

#### 1) (From A.O.B. in previous minutes) Procedure for Announcements at Club Meetings

It was agreed that in future all announcements should come through the Chair to ensure the smooth running of meetings.

**Action: Chairman - announcement at meeting.**

#### 2) (From A.O.B. in previous minutes) Fylde Bird Club Rarities Committee

The action on Dave Pitman to produce an article about rarity recording for the newsletter, was still outstanding.

**Action continuing: Dave Pitman**

A meeting of the rarities committee had taken place and its decisions incorporated into the 1995 Report.  
Action complete.

It was confirmed that not all rarity descriptions received by the Lancs Report editors were being copied to the Fylde editor. It was also noted that the recently published '95 Lancs report contained other Fylde records which had not been received by the Fylde editor, e.g. 450 Magpies recorded at Blackpool Zoo!

It was noted that this problem was not a new one, despite past assurances that records would be passed on. It was agreed that Fylde Club members should be requested to pass their records to Paul Slade first. Paul has easy access to copying facilities and could quickly pass copies on the Lancs editors. Andrew Cadman offered to raise the matter at the next meeting of the Lancs Forum.

**Action: Andrew Cadman**

4) (From A.O.B. in previous minutes) Fylde Bird Club Bird Race

It was noted that the mooted January Bird Race had not been announced at the AGM. It was reasoned that after the Lancs Forum had announced their sponsored new year race, then it would have been inappropriate for the Fylde Bird Club to run one at the same time. It was agreed that the Club should make plans for a spring Bird Race as usual.

5) (From A.O.B. in previous minutes) Proposed Bird Reserve at Newton Marsh

The Secretary reported that he had not yet written to the RSPB on this matter, as he was awaiting information from a contact who Dave Pitman had met. This contact was said to have key data on breeding birds at the site.

**Action continuing: Secretary to write to Tim Melling of the RSPB**

6) (From A.O.B. in previous minutes) Proposed Wildfowl Reserve Over Wyre

The Secretary reported that he would address this issue after the Newton Marsh proposal was initiated.

**Action: Secretary to write to the RSPB and the WWT.**

## AGENDA

1) Moss Edge Land Offer

The Secretary and Chairman reported back from a site meeting which they had attended with the owners on Friday 17th of January. It was confirmed that 1.15 acres of land were being offered to the Club free of charge and there was additional area of adjacent land which the Club had an opportunity to purchase. The Secretary distributed copies of maps of the site. The maximum additional area of land, which may be for sale was 5.1 acres, however another party had been given first refusal on 1.7 acres of this land.

All agreed that the Club should accept the offer of 1.15 acres without charge and make a bid for the remaining land.

The Secretary announced that he had already contacted Mr. Chris. Band who had agreed to act on behalf of the Club as Solicitor. Chris had agreed to take on the task with a view to minimising costs to the Club. Mr. Band had advised that four Trustees from the Club would need to be nominated. The Committee agreed that the Chairman; Secretary; Treasurer and Paul Slade should be nominated as Trustees. The Secretary agreed to inform Chris Band of the names.

**Action: Secretary - write to Mr.C.Band**

The Chairman informed the meeting that tentative negotiations had begun and that a figure of £1000 per acre had been suggested by the Club verbally. However as yet no response had been received.

The Treasurer confirmed that the Clubs total liquid assets stood at £5000 including £2817 in the Special Projects Fund. It was agreed that an Extraordinary General Meeting would need to be called before funds could be released for any land purchase.

It was also agreed to wait until the Club had some idea how much money might be required before considering how much we could afford and how we might raise funds for such a purchase.

The Chairman and Secretary agreed to continue negotiations and report back to the committee when there were any developments.

**Action: Secretary and Chairman**

**A.O.B.**

**1) 1995 Bird Report**

Alan Hinchliffe announced that he had collected the 1995 Report from the printers and produced a box of copies. The cost was £495 for 200 copies. It was agreed that they should be sold to non members for £3.50 each and that other outlets should retain 50p of the sale on each copy.

The reports were distributed as follows, (excluding individual's own copies) :-

Alan Hinchliffe :30 for WWT Martin Mere  
Dave Pitman: 10 copies  
Paul Slade: 5 copies  
Andrew Cadman: 35 copies (inc 25 for Leighton Moss  
5 for Lancs Forum & 5 for Lancaster Soc.)  
Alan Dawe: 5 copies for Lytham Nature Reserve  
Paul Ellis: 9 copies  
Chairman :the remainder (inc. 5 for Fleetwood Museum  
& 5 for Marton Mere )

It was suggested that Club members who are also members of Fylde Naturalists should be approached to see if they would be willing to take copies for sale at Fylde Nats meetings.

The Secretary agreed to send a copy to the BTO for review.

**Action: Secretary**

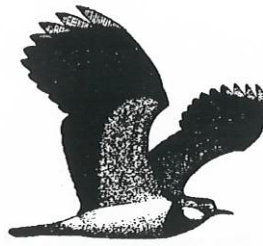
The Chairman agreed to seek mentions in Birdwatch and Birdwatching monthly magazines.

**Action: Chairman**

Paul Slade agreed to approach Stuart Meredith with a request that he mention the report and the Club's meeting programme in his newspaper column.

**Action: Paul Slade**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:00 pm.



**Fylde  
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**FYLDE BIRD CLUB  
BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 8:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY  
THE 19 TH OF MARCH AT BLACKPOOL CRICKET CLUB**

**Present**

Chairman; Secretary; Treasurer; and 30 members.

Apologies were received from John Fletcher, Maurice Jones, Frank Walsh and Alan Dawe.

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the last business meeting held on the 16th of October were read and approved.

**Matters Arising**

1) Lancashire Breeding Birds Survey

The Chairman announced that anyone wishing to take part should contact Maurice Jones who would put them in touch with the relevant 10km steward. The Chairman stated that recording forms were available from him.

2) Marton Mere

The Chairman reported that fencing works for part of the extension were complete and that the enhancement of the hide with materials secured by the Club was also complete.

He also stated that management work in accordance with the management plan was being undertaken by the warden and the volunteer wardens. Scrub management work had been undertaken and this had ended last Sunday. Dave Mc.Grath added that arm rests would be fitted in the upgraded hide to complete the job.

3) St.Michael's Show

The Chairman announced that the Club intended to take part in the next show and had been offered accommodation inside the Wyre Borough Council Tent. He added that he was working on obtaining some display materials.

Mike McGough suggested a game for children where different stalls would have pictures of birds fixed on them and the participants would have to identify them and record them on a form provided at the Club's stand. It was stated that the Club should use this event to try to raise some money.

**Correspondence**

1) Wareings

The Secretary reported that Wareings had given the materials for the hide upgrade at Marton Mere free of charge and that he had written to them on behalf of the Club offering thanks.

2) Wyndyke Farm Development

The Secretary reported that SGS Environment had written to the Club requesting information on breeding birds at Wyndyke Farm. He stated that he had written back giving what little data we had and requesting access to conduct a proper survey. Unfortunately the only access granted by the landowner would be to accompany the SGS consultant on his visits which were planned to the one in April, May and June only.

## Agenda

### 1) Moss Side

The Secretary updated the membership on the current status of the proposal for the Club to buy land at Moss Side to create a nature reserve.

He announced that he had written to all our members and ex members going back several years to inform them of the Club's intentions and to request support. He stated that 96 people had been contacted.

He reported that he had asked the advice of Chris Band, a solicitor, who was acting for the Club on some of the issues raised at the last meeting. The replies were as follows :-

The Club did not need to take out public liability insurance (but if it did it would be inexpensive).

We would not be obliged to fence off the site.

We would be liable for Council Tax of Stamp duty on purchase.

The Club would have to pay a land registry fee of £40 and if we wanted a search undertaking that would cost about £50.

Chris Band would make no charge for his services.

The Secretary also reported that at a recent meeting with the developers they had asked the Club to set out what state they would wish to have the site handed over in. This was in relation to part of the site where some large loose earth mounds have been produced during the adjacent building operations. He stated that following discussion with the Chairman, Maurice Jones and Stuart Meredith he had written to Newfield Jones Homes requesting that the earth be moved to the west and south boundaries to form banks. It had been decided not to take up the builder's offer of digging ponds at this time until a management plan was in place. The letter also requested the provision of an animal proof fence to keep pets out.

It was reported that Simon Hayhow had found recent Harvest Mouse nests' on the site in the last two weeks and that the presence of this species was sufficient to qualify the site as a County Biological Heritage Site.

The Secretary announced that he had received donations totalling £215 from Chris Hawkins; Frank Walsh; Frank Lee and Kinta Beaver.

The question of whether the Club may be able to secure some lottery money was discussed and the Chairman agreed to investigate the matter. It was stated that even if the Club was unsuccessful, it may help us with any possible future appeal for lottery funds. It was stated that English Nature may provide some funds and again the Chairman agreed to investigate.

Don Rusling asked if the Club had bought the land yet. The Secretary replied that we had not and had only made a verbal agreement to buy the land if the terms and conditions were acceptable to the Club. He added that at the moment we could walk away without incurring any cost should we decide that we didn't want it after all.

Monty Myerscough stated that once the adjacent houses were occupied then the Club should contact the residents with the intention of cultivating a good relationship with them.

All agreed that this would be an important job to ensure that the reserve would be a success.

Dave Mc.Grath asked if we would be able to control the water level on the site. The Secretary and Chairman answered that the only means would be by lowering the ground level.

Don Rusling asked if the adjacent land was to be developed for housing. The Secretary and Chairman answered that there were no plans for housing on the adjacent land to the north and that the field to the west which was owned by the builders was not allowed to be built on. It was asked who owned the next plot of land but one to west and were there any plans to develop this land. The answer to this question was unknown but the Secretary agreed to try and find out. It was noted that this land was unmanaged.

### 2) Bird Race

It was agreed that this year's Bird Race proceeds would go towards the purchase of the Moss Side site. After some discussion, the date was agreed to be the 4th of May.

It was also agreed that there would be a prize for the most money raised ,which would be a book, and a prize for the most species recorded which would be the video donated by Paul Doherty. There would be a get together at 9:00 pm in the Plough at Staining at the end of the race

### 3) Report from Committee

The Chairman stated that the committee's minutes were now included in the Newsletters. He made a request for a volunteer to work with Andrew Cadman to type up his hand written copy of the Fylde Breeding Bird Survey and stated that it would amount to about 45 pages of typing.

The Chairman announced that he had reason to be optimistic about developments at Rossall Coast Guards in the near future.

Don Rusling praised the recent newsletter and expressed approval at the inclusion of the committee's minutes.

### 4) Announcements from the Floor

The Chairman requested all members who wished to make announcements to make them through the chair. This request was to avoid excessive disruption as had happened recently when a guest speaker was prevented from starting by lengthy unexpected announcements from the floor.

### Announcements

#### 1) Records for the Bird Report

The Chairman requested members to submit last year's records as soon as possible to Paul Slade.

### Any Other Business

#### 1) Litter at the Mere

Alan Hinchliffe commented on the large amounts of uncleared litter near the caravan site and in the fenced off areas at Marton Mere.

Dave McGrath stated that there should be no litter on the south side as this had been cleared. The remainder would be cleared next week. The caravan park were responsible for clearing their own litter.

#### 2) Opening Hours of the Marton Mere Visitor Centre

Alan Hinchliffe asked why the centre at Marton Mere was closed on Saturdays and expressed the view that it was a great shame that it should be closed on one of the busiest days for visitors.

Dave McGrath stated that he had been told he had to have one weekend day off and Saturday was the less busy day. He stated that he had been unable to organise a rota of sufficient voluntary wardens to ensure that the centre was open on Saturdays.

Pauline McGough was present on most Saturdays but at least two volunteer wardens were required at once to allow the centre to remain open while the site was patrolled.

It was noted that there were 12 volunteer wardens.

The Secretary and Chairman agreed to raise the issue at the next Marton Mere Management Committee meeting.

Len Blacow suggested that new volunteers may be found to open and man the centre on Saturdays.

Dave McGrath commented that a post box for sightings would be incorporated into the centre soon.

#### 3) Provision of Reeds from Marton Mere to the Zoo

Dave McGrath stated that two loads of reedbed were wanted by Blackpool Zoo. A JCB, tractor and trailer would be used to collect a scraping of a few inches depth from the area to the north east of the island.

### Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 16th April when Peter Guy would be speaking on the Trough of Bowland.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:30 pm.

Many years ago, I erected my first Barn Owl nest box on a farm that had never seen a Barn Owl let alone had them breeding. At that time Barn Owls were a very rare commodity - both locally and nationally so you can imagine I didn't have a great deal of optimism in attracting a pair of Barn Owls to take up residence in one of my boxes. Undeterred by this minor detail, I set about making and erecting Barn Owl boxes anywhere that I thought was suitable, and one or two places that clearly weren't. The thinking behind this strategy was that the main reasons for the decline of the Barn Owl was loss of suitable hunting habitat and loss of suitable nest sites due to a process called "modernisation". A fact that I'm sure you are all familiar with.

For the next 3 years or so the boxes I had put up all remained empty except for maybe the odd pigeon, and sightings of Barn Owls were somewhere between rare and none existent. I'd visited a number of places where Barn Owls used to breed and seen the tell tale signs, piles of pellets under favourite perches and whitewashed walls from their droppings at entrance and exit sites, but none of this was fresh and it was obvious that the sites had been empty for many years. Nearly everyone I spoke to remembered when they used to have Barn Owls breeding on their farm or a neighbours farm, but hadn't seen one for many years. It was becoming very obvious that getting Barn Owls in Barn Owl boxes wasn't going to be easy, but at least if the population did start to show any signs of improving I had quite a few "des res" properties suitable for first time buyers wanting to start a family.

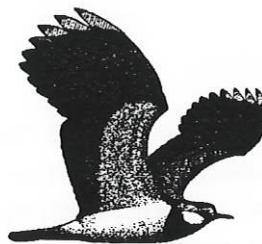
On one of my periodic checks of the farms that I had Barn Owl boxes up in (the one I mentioned at the beginning), I was amazed to find a fairly fresh Barn Owl pellet under the box and white streaks of droppings near the top of a post at the other end of the barn. After talking to the farmer it became obvious that a Barn Owl was now regularly using the barn and more importantly the box. That evening and a few evenings during the next 2 weeks or so I spent keeping a vigil with my brother, Andrew, watching the box from behind a makeshift hide that we had erected at the far side of the barn. You never know what to expect in situations like this, so you tend to get there early, hoping something will happen before it gets too dark to see clearly. But Barn Owls being Barn Owls do what they want to do and when they want to do it. 2-3 hours after getting in the hide, by which time the light in the Barn is bordering on pitch black, and we're just about to call it a day, a sound is heard, the unmistakable sound of Barn Owl's feet on nest box floor a few seconds later there it is, a lovely visible pale shape at the entrance to the box. Through the gloom it was possible to detect a pale form, but if it turned with its back to you it became invisible. "Who cares", it was a Barn Owl and it was in my box, ornithological history in the making, a moment to savour and one I will never forget. Unfortunately it became evident during the next few Barn Owl watches that there was only 1 bird and not a pair, so breeding might be slightly impaired.

It was over a year later when, whilst on my way back from fox watching (I love all things nocturnal), I decided to have a quick check on old "Scar Face" as

we affectionately knew "him or her", not easy to tell. Anyway as I very carefully peered round the side of barn, I could hear weird and wonderful sounds coming from both ends of the barn. Just as I turned my head to see if I could see anything (it was a bright moonlit night), the bird at the far side of the barn must have spotted me and flew out and almost immediately another flew from very close overhead making the most fantastic sound I'd ever heard and loud to the point of deafening. So that was the famous Barn Owl screech I'd heard so much about. I hadn't only heard it, I'd lived it. Needless to say many evenings after that were spent in that barn watching and learning about Barn Owl family life. On one occasion actually seeing 3 adult Barn Owls in the barn together. But the intruder was swiftly dealt with by the resident pair and sent packing in no uncertain terms. That year, they only managed to raise 2 young but they certainly gave me hours of enjoyment watching them, and hearing them. Young Barn Owls are very vocal and get up to some amazing antics. They bred there for 2 more years but unfortunately the site has been empty ever since. Elsewhere, though Barn Owls have been slowly occupying many of the other boxes scattered around the Fylde and the last 3 years have seen a dramatic improvement in the fortunes of this magnificent bird. It's too early to say if this recovery will be long term, and we can look forward to a time when Barn Owls are once again a common sight on the farms in our area. But I for one certainly hope it is and in the meantime, I'm going to continue to enjoy watching them when I can, and keep putting up nest boxes in places I think are suitable. Even though some of the boxes I have put up haven't had Barn Owl, and they might have been up 10 years or more I never give up hope. From my experience I know that as long as the building remains standing, there is always a welcome and a comfortable residence just waiting for any "phantom of the night" that might find itself in the vicinity.

**MONTY MYERSCOUGH**





**Fylde  
Bird Club  
LANCASHIRE**

## FYLDE BIRD CLUB COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 8:40 PM ON TUESDAY THE 8TH OF APRIL AT THE DUKE WILLIAM AT LONGRIDGE

#### Present

Chairman; Secretary; Treasurer; Alan Hinchliffe; Paul Slade; Dave Pitman and Andrew Cadman.

#### Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 27th November were read and approved.

#### Matters Arising

##### 1) Breeding Birds Survey

The Chairman announced that Steven Dunstan had volunteered to type up the text of the Fylde Breeding Birds Survey. Andrew will liaise with Steven to progress the job.

**Action continuing : Andrew Cadman**

##### 2) Rossall Coast Guards Tower

The Chairman reported that the Wyre Ranger Service were working on the preparation of proposals which should lead to the opening of the tower as a visitor facility.

**Action continuing: Chairman to keep the Committee informed of developments.**

##### 3) Marton Mere

It was reported that the hide enhancement works are now complete. The Secretary suggested that the Club should seek agreement from the warden to put up a perspex sheet behind which Bird Club promotional material could be displayed. The Treasurer stated that he may have a scrap piece at name and offered to look for it. The Chairman offered to put it up when available.

**Action: Treasurer & Chairman to look for & affix perspex sheet.**

##### 4) Collection of Sales Money for the 1994 Fylde Bird Report

It was believed that the Fairhaven RSPB Scheme would re-open on the 1st May.

**Action continuing: Treasurer to secure payment from the RSPB for sales of '94 Reports and return of unsold old reports.**

##### 5) 1997 Meeting Programme

Alan Hinchliffe had secured the 1997 Programme on printed cards from the Bird Report printers.

**Action: Complete**

##### 6) New Club Car Sticker

The Chairman agreed to pursue the provision of the a car sticker once the Chairman and Secretary had finished with it. **Action continuing: Chairman.**

#### 7) Newsletter Copy

It was noted that the end of April was the deadline for copy for the next issue. It was decided that the newsletter should contain the Club's Business Meeting minutes for the benefit of members who were unable to attend the meeting. Alan Hinchliffe voiced concerns over the size of the issue which would need photocopying. The Secretary offered to try to reduce the amount by reducing the text size. The Chairman and Paul Slade agreed to produce a site guide to the Skipool and Stannah area of the River Wyre, however it was unlikely to be ready for the next newsletter. Dave Pitman offered to ask another member if he would write a guide for the Bank Lane area. He also agreed to provide the planned article on the Rarities committee for the forthcoming issue. The Secretary offered to produce an access guide to Marton Mere if the above two fell through.

**Action: Chairman/Paul Slade produce site guide to River Wyre.**

**Action: Dave Pitman to produce an article on the Rarities Committee and request a Bank Lane site guide.**

**Action: Secretary to shrink the minutes & produce a Marton Mere access guide if above not completed in time.**

#### 8) Fylde Bird Club Rarities Committee

Dave Pitman announced that the Committee would meet in mid May to consider 1996 records.

**Action : Dave Pitman to convene a meeting**

Andrew Cadman stated that he had raised the issue of records held by the Lancs Report Editors not reaching the Fylde Report Editor at the last meeting of the Lancs Forum. He reported that there had been a problem concerning the address of Fylde Editor, last year when he had moved house and that in future there should be no problems. Action: completed

#### 9) Proposed Bird Reserve at Newton Marsh

The Secretary reported that he had still not yet written to the RSPB on this matter, as he was still awaiting key information from a contact who Dave Pitman had met. This contact was said to have a diary containing nine years of data on breeding birds at the site. It was believed that there were other Club members who knew the individual very well. Dave Pitman agreed to track down 'the man with the diary'. Action : Dave Pitman to contact man with data

**Action continuing: Secretary to write to Tim Melling of the RSPB**

#### 10) Proposed Wildfowl Reserve Over Wyre

The Secretary reported that he would address this issue after the Newton Marsh proposal was initiated.

**Action: Secretary to write to the RSPB and the WWT.**

#### 11) 1995 Bird Report

The Chairman agreed to take some copies to the next Lancs Forum meeting to pass on for sale at Mere Sands Wood. Action Chairman

The Secretary had not yet sent a copy to the BTO for review. Action: Secretary

The Chairman had secured mentions in Birdwatch and Birdwatching magazines. Action: complete

Paul Slade had approached Stuart Meredith with a request that he mention the report and the Club's meeting programme in his newspaper column. Stuart had complied with the request. Action: complete

#### 12) Moss Edge Land Offer

At the March Club Business Meeting the Secretary had reported on progress to the membership and since then there had been no developments. The Secretary reported that he had submitted an

application for BT's environment week but that he had received no response as yet. The Chairman announced that he had secured information regarding potential sources of grant aid from the National Lottery and English Nature. It was agreed that the Chairman and Secretary would collaborate to prepare applications. The Chairman and Secretary agreed to keep the committee informed of developments.

**Action : Secretary and Chairman**

Alan Hinchliffe agreed to secure a copy of the Newspaper article run recently by the Lytham St. Annes Gazette on the proposed reserve. **Action Alan Hinchliffe**

## AGENDA

### 1) Membership

The Secretary announced that he had now handed over the task of membership secretary to Peter Bainbridge. Peter would be responsible for maintaining routine contact with the membership from now on and this would include the mailing of newsletters to members not at the meetings. The Secretary warned that in the past he had been left with very few copies of the newsletter and had to make extra copies himself. Dave Pitman agreed to police the issue of newsletters at the meetings.

**Action Peter Bainbridge and Dave Pitman**

The Secretary noted that the one page promotional leaflet for the Club was now out of date and needed re-vamping. The Secretary accepted an action to re-work the leaflet. **Action Secretary**

### 2) 1997 Fylde Bird Club Bird Race

Sponsorship by businesses was discussed. It was agreed that the Club should approach businesses with a view to securing sponsorship for the publication of the Bird Report rather than the Bird Race. The Chairman and Secretary reported that they had prepared a press release for the event.

### 3) St. Micheal's Show

The Chairman reported that Wyre Borough Council will lend display boards to the club for the event. The Secretary and Chairman agreed to produce promotional material for the Club and the Chairman offered to get materials laminated. It was believed that the Club should be able to exploit the event to raise money. **Action : Secretary and Chairman**

### 4) 1996 Fylde Bird Report

Alan Hinchliffe asked when the report would be printed. Paul Slade and the Chairman agreed that they would towards having it ready for printing in August 1997.

The content was discussed and the following agreed:

- i) Site guides should be included including one for goose watching Over Wyre
- ii) It should contain promotional information about the Club
- iii) The Secretary's report should be re-introduced
- iv) A review/ information on Guided walks by the Chairman should be included
- v) The possibility of including photographs should be explored
- vi) Sponsorship to offset publication costs should be sought
- vii) If possible the Kentish Plover should appear on the cover
- viii) Tony Disley should be approached regarding the provision of artwork.
- ix) Old artwork could be reused

It was agreed that ASD could be offered advertising space in part exchange for artwork.

Dave Pitman offered to make a donation towards the cost if ASD agreed to provide some material.

**Action Dave Pitman to approach ASD regarding artwork.**

The Treasurer agreed to produce accounts for the production cost and income from the Report.

**Action Treasurer**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:01 pm.