

SOC Clyde Branch

Annual General Meeting, Monday 7th September 2020

MINUTES

Held online

The meeting was Chaired by Ian Fulton with 20 other members present. Ian welcomed everyone.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Iain Gibson, Kevin Sinclair and Donald Wilson.

2. Minutes of previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM had been available on the SOC web site for some time. There were no comments made regarding these and no matters arising.

3. Office Bearers' Reports

3.1 Chairperson's Report

Zul Bhatia presented the Chairperson's report. This is attached as Appendix 1. He took a moment at the start to pay tribute to Jimmy Maxwell, a longstanding member of the branch who very sadly died recently. His good friend Lang Stewart also said a few words.

Zul noted that, whilst numbers weren't high in terms of attendance at this AGM, it was nice to see a few attendees from further afield, presumably assisted by the online nature of the meeting.

3.2 Secretary's Report

Ian Fulton presented the Secretary's report. This is attached as Appendix 2.

3.3 Excursions Convenor's report

David Palmar presented his report. This is attached as Appendix 3

3.4 Treasurer's Report

Liz Parsons presented the accounts. These are attached as Appendix 4. It was noted that some of the balance in the account is restricted for expenditure and this would be made clear.

3.5 Local Recorder's Report

Unfortunately, Iain Gibson, Clyde Branch Recorder, was unable to attend the AGM.

4. Election of Office Bearers

The following were proposed as Office Bearers by the Committee.

Chairperson – Zul Bhatia
Treasurer – Liz Parsons
Secretary – Ian Fulton
Branch Representative on SOC Council – Zul Bhatia

There were no objections or proposals for others to stand and so these were unanimously accepted by the meeting and are thus duly elected.

It was noted that the Branch is looking for a new Treasurer and Secretary as Liz Parsons and Ian Fulton intend to step down. Members should contact Zul Bhatia if they wish to step forward.

5. Election of Committee Members

The following were proposed as Committee Members.

Toby Wilson, Iain Gibson, David Palmar, Sandy McNeil, Fiona McLean, Kevin Sinclair, Andrew Russell, Donald Wilson, Emma Anderson and Rebecca Dickson.

All these were unanimously accepted by the meeting and are thus duly elected.

6. Any other business

Indoor meetings will be on Zoom until further notice and be on the 1st Thursday of the month. John Calladine will be speaking at the first meeting on 1st October.

The joint BTO/ SOC Spring 2021 meeting in Moray has been cancelled and alternatives are being looked at. A virtual autumn conference in 2021 is being considered.

Zul Bhatia noted that he was keen to hear about and capture some of the ornithological work some of the members do, and if they were agreeable, it be used to raise the profile of the SOC and its aims.

Ian Fulton thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

Minutes prepared by Toby Wilson, Committee Member, SOC Clyde Branch

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Appendix 1

Chairperson's report for 2019/2020

I have now been in post for two years as Chair and I have continued to learn more about the history of the branch, and getting to know many more people and issues. Over the last year, I have been guided by / worked closely with our expanded Clyde Branch Committee. The branch continued to input in to the running of the SOC nationally with Fiona Maclean on the Management Committee and myself on Council. Fiona & I are both on the small team developing a Safeguarding Policy for the SOC to protect minors and vulnerable adults.

The branch is in good heart with a welcome increase in branch membership, numbers attending meetings going up and many members involved in a range of activities. Daily Grapevines were sent out, a new WhatsApp group was set up and relationships with the Clydebirds Facebook page (with several hundred members) continue to be excellent. The Secretary's report gives more details.

Apart from watching, enjoying birds and reporting them (increasingly via BirdTrack), some members also took part in UK-wide surveys (Breeding Bird Survey, Big Garden Bird Watch, Heronries Census, Tawny Owl survey, BTO's Garden Birdwatch, WeBS, Goose monitoring, Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme, etc). The Clyde Ringing Group continued to be very active and made some remarkable discoveries some of which were shared to us at the September talk. Other local projects I am aware of included nest box making & monitoring at Linn Park & Newlands, Winter Gull monitoring in Glasgow Parks and studying feathers (Connor Smith), Many members volunteered for other organisations too, of course including the newly formed seabird monitoring programme from Calmac ferries.

The Covid-19 Pandemic created major disruption of course from mid-March 2020 and we had to cancel our April meeting and all remaining excursions too. Nationally, SOC was severely affected HQ was closed, arrangements were made for staff to work from home & essential meetings to be made by video, Council meetings were cancelled as were several gatherings that had been planned over many months including the Spring Conference in Elgin, the Branch Development one in Grantown and the Scottish Bird Recorders meeting in Stirling. The future of the 2020 Annual Conference hangs in the balance just now. The UN climate talks due to be held in Glasgow later this year have also been postponed until 2021. Our Youth Connect group had already been involved in discussions about a Youth Conference element to the Climate talks.

Branch Committee

Everyone that was on the Committee in the previous year agreed to stay on for the next year. Due to the AGM being postponed (Covid-19), all terms were extended to when we can have the AGM (hopefully September 2020).

The Committee now consists of

Ian Fulton – Secretary

Toby Wilson – Committee Minutes Secretary

Zul Bhatia – Chairperson and representative of the branch on SOC Council

Liz Parsons – Treasurer

Other members: **David Palmar, Iain Gibson, Sandy McNeil, Fiona McLean, Kevin Sinclair, Andrew Russell, Donald Wilson** and **Emma Anderson**. **Val Wilson** (as Assistant recorder) is

also an Ex Officio member.

The Clyde branch Committee met as usual at the RSPB Office in Glasgow in June & October 2019 and in March 2020.

Thankfully, Ian Fulton, who had signalled his intention to stand down at the end of the 2019/20 year, agreed to stay on for another year. We are still looking to replace him of course. Toby Wilson who hosts our Committee meetings at the RSPB Glasgow Office, also volunteered to take on the task of arranging the meetings and writing up the minutes – this takes a significant chunk off the Secretary's role. Thank you Toby

Winter evening meetings

A series of very informative talks were given at the monthly meetings both by our own members and by visiting speakers.

September - Iain Livingstone – Highlights of Clyde Ringing Group activities

October – Presentations by SOC Youth Connect members: Vanesa (Iceland), Stephen (waders) and Andrew (patch watching)

November – Mick Durham - Wildlife of Shetland

December – Chris Waltho Tramping the tundra - surveying arctic birds

January – Bernie Zonfrillo - Gannets from Ailsa Craig and beyond

February – Tom Churchyard - The Shiant Isles Seabird Recovery Project

March – Phil Taylor - Seafood, Sustainability and the Future of Scotland's Seas

April – We were due to have the AGM and a presentation about birding in Spain from Sandy McNeil but this meeting was cancelled (Covid-19)

Numbers at the meetings varied between 34 and 49 (average 42) and were a slight increase over the previous year (Av 40)

Thank you once again to Bernie Zonfrillo for hosting us in the Graham Kerr building again (for the last time – see below) A big thank you to Liz and her team (including new helpers after the departure of Hayley Douglas) for tea and biscuits each month. At most meetings, Ian Fulton also provided a review of recent sightings in the Clyde Area with many photographs sourced mainly from Grapevine submissions and from the Clydebirds Facebook group.

Branch Outings

These have gone very well visiting sites in the Clyde as well as further afield. Our Outings Convener, David Palmar has written a report, so I won't say more about them just now except to say that unfortunately, the ones to Great Cumbrae and Loch Lomond had to be cancelled due to Covid-19.

New Venue for meetings

After some further research and following some leads, we decided at a Committee meeting to move to Renfield St Stephens Centre on Bath Street for the start of the new season, hopefully in September 2020 (Covid-19 permitting). We will have to invest in our own equipment in the future and will investigate grants towards this.

Bird Reports / Atlas / App

I don't want to pre-empt the Recorders report, but did want to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers who helped with converting past records often submitted in Word in to Excel and to Val Wilson for 'cleaning up' where required and inputting this in to BirdTrack. 2009 & 2010

are complete and we are well advanced with 2011. There is a considerable amount of work involved in getting a year done and much chasing of people involved!

I was aware that many people use eBird to submit bird records, so I wrote to them last autumn to request the bird records for the Clyde area. They could not send me the Clyde data alone, but sent me records for all of Scotland dating back to 1878!. I received over a million records (1,048,576) [including Eskimo Curlew at Peterhead on 28/09/1878] and a list of over half a million Observers (533,853)! I was overwhelmed until Ian Andrews (from the Lothian Branch and editor of the SOC Journal) came to my rescue. With his computer wizardry, he extracted the Clyde records for us. 25,501 records dating back to 1962 – a more manageable amount. I went back to Ian several times with other related queries and he saved me many hours of work every time. Thank you Ian.

Val Wilson leads on maintaining the SOC database of birds recorded in the Clyde as well as producing the daily Grapevine and now overseeing the new WhatsApp group. Unfortunately, Iain Gibson continues to be dogged by health issues but he continues to be the Recorder for the Clyde area and inputs his knowledge and experience as required. He has been particularly active at times on the Clydebirds Facebook page where he also (gently) promotes SOC membership. He is working on the 2009 report. I have put a lot of thought in to a way forward and have made suggestions for a slimmed-down 'trial' 2010 report and this is being discussed at present.

We made contact with BTO about retrieving the Atlas data collected many years ago but the person leading with this was off on Sabbatical, then Covid-19 struck, so little progress to report, I'm afraid.

The SOC Where to Watch Birds in Scotland App (towards which our branch contributed £1000) won the Birders' Choice Award for the Product of the Year for 2019. It has recently surpassed the 10,000 downloads mark. There are still gaps in coverage of the Clyde area and Ian Fulton is trying to recruit local experts to plug them

SOC Youth Connect

This is an initiative (launched in 2018) to look at how we can integrate and welcome more young people in to the SOC. There is no intention to form a separate group, but is all about sharing information, knowledge and needs. The main method of communication at present is via the Facebook group but we did have a meeting in October 2019 (at RSPB Lochwinnoch) to move forward too. We now have 45 members. The Facebook page has featured opportunities for paid jobs, volunteer positions, grants, etc.

Three of the group gave presentations at our October 19 branch meeting, and a couple of them gave talks at the SOC Annual Conference. It is obvious that both at our branch meetings and more particularly at the SOC Annual Conference (where a special networking event was held for them), young people are better represented than in recent years - a very welcome development.

The Future

Unfortunately, the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 restrictions make it difficult to plan with certainty but next season's programme of winter meetings is virtually complete. Outings are being planned too.

The project to plant up some fields with a crop for wildlife had moved forward with identifying a couple of areas and partners too, but has been set back by Covid-19. We will continue to pick it up again when things have settled down. It may be possible to link ourselves with the Yearnstane project - a landscape-scale conservation / rewilding project centred around Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park but extending outwards from it. Liz Parsons is a leading light of this new project and also of course on our Committee.

We hope that with the input of knowledgeable Committee members who have volunteered (Donald Wilson, Fiona McLean and Sandy McNeil), we will be able to produce some guidance to some seasonal birding highlights in the Clyde area.

At our last Committee meeting, there was interest in using Twitter too. This will be investigated further.

It would be good if we were able to encourage our members to write articles for the SOC Journal Scottish Birds, write up their activities in a form that we could share and to make more use of our database of bird records.

Challenges still remain, of course. Little further progress has been made with developing Paisley Moss LNR as a reserve in co-operation with Glasgow Airport. No contact has been made with Scottish Wildlife Trust over the management of Cathkin Braes. I haven't been personally involved in either of these two issues myself, so far.

Acknowledgements

Many people's contributions have already been acknowledged in the relevant section above, but for the branch to operate as successfully as it has, there are so many more people involved. Thank you to all of you who have supported the Clyde Branch in one way or another this year. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please let one of the Committee members have them.

Zul Bhatia - Chair, Clyde Branch SOC, May 2020

Appendix 2

Secretary's Report

There were very few external communications. Most of these were either from birding holiday companies promoting their trips or from publishers promoting a book. It was not felt appropriate to pass these on to the branch members.

Clyde Branch membership now stands at 309 memberships or 353 persons (counting joint memberships as two persons) plus 1 Junior member and 13 Student members. This is an increase of 15 adult members compared with last year.

Although this is not an SOC club initiative, we would like to thank John Molloy for administering the Facebook 'Clydebirds' group. We have been increasingly using this Facebook group to announce SOC meetings and to advertise the Grapevine and other branch activities. It is interesting to note that this group now has 868 members after only a couple of years. It shows that there are many more people in the area interested in birds and wildlife than we manage to attract to the SOC.

The distribution list for the daily Clyde Grapevine news message now stands at 230. As ever, many thanks to Val Wilson for all her efforts in maintaining such a high standard of service and for her enduring patience with contributors. Val also recently set up a 'WhatsApp' group called Clyde SOC Bird News. This now has a count of 60 subscribers and is proving to be interesting and popular.

For the last couple of years the Secretary has been using the Mailchimp facility to send out publicity notices for our evening meetings. To comply with GDPR regulations, the distribution for this is to members who have subscribed to receive such emails. Currently this list has 186 subscribed members. The same distribution list is used to send out notifications of branch outings. So over 120 of our branch members don't receive notices about our evening meetings and our outings! This may be because members have not set their 'preferences' on the SOC website to consent to receiving publicity notices. If you have not recorded your preferences on the SOC website please do so now.

Ian Fulton – Secretary, Clyde Branch SOC

Appendix 3

SOC Clyde Excursion Report for AGM 2020

The first few SOC Clyde excursions planned for this year took place as scheduled.

26 Sep 2019

The first excursion was to Baron's Haugh, led by Lang Stewart, who knows the reserve well and gave us the benefit of his extensive local knowledge and his photographic expertise. Amongst highlights of the 43 species seen were good views of the Nuthatches which breed in Dalzell Woods, a Great spotted woodpecker at its nest, Kingfisher, Whitethroat, and on the haugh itself, Gadwall and mating damselflies.

13 October 2019

The Musselburgh excursion, timed to coincide with an incoming tide was ably led by David Clugston, who is used to teaching groups of people how to get the best from their birdwatching, and whose depth of knowledge and ability to communicate it is impressive. Walking round the sea wall in dry weather, there were Red-breasted mergansers, Common scoters, a Brent goose, Twite and Rock pipit. At the river mouth there were Wigeon, Shelduck, large mixed gull flocks, waders such as Dunlin, Turnstones, Redshank, Oystercatchers, Bar-tailed godwit, Curlew and a small flock of Greylag geese. On the scrapes there were Lapwings, Oystercatchers and Grey herons.

17 November 2019

We met at the cafe in Loch Leven RSPB reserve, on a cold frosty morning with bright sunshine. In the area of the visitor centre there were some common passerines and red squirrels. Since the scrapes were frozen, we made our way up the hill instead, which afforded magnificent views over the Loch and its surroundings, even as far as the Bass Rock, Craigleith, Fidra and North Berwick Law. After using the new accessible underpass, instead of observing from the hides, we walked eastwards along the path beside the south shore of Loch Leven, where we had good views of Mallard, Teal, Goosander and Tufted duck.

13 February 2020

Given the expected winter weather, a tour of the Glasgow Museums resource Centre was arranged, principally to see the bird collection. This was led by curator Ann Ainsworth, who showed us not only a wide variety of stuffed birds, but also eggs, nests and some larger animals. The storage conditions are carefully controlled to ensure that the specimens, some old and valuable, can survive as long as possible.

8 March 2020

Linlithgow Loch was the venue for this excursion, timed to coincide with the courtship displays of the Great crested grebes. At the west end the grebes were head-shaking and calling, then we walked in mostly dry but cold weather round the loch and observed a good number of other species, mainly water birds including ducks, gulls and Cormorants. In the afternoon, some members of the party stayed on and managed to see a pair of Great crested grebes mating.

The excursions to RSPB Loch Lomond and Great Cumbrae had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus. It is hoped to run them next session instead.

Excursions in 2020-21 and will be communicated from headquarters via the MailChimp

system, and included with the autumn edition of Scottish Birds.

Anyone interested in receiving electronic reminders and information about excursions should ensure that under GDPR, they are signed up to receive this information.

Any cancellations or last minute news will be communicated on the SOC's website.

David Palmar - Outings Organiser, Clyde Branch SOC

Appendix 4

Scottish Ornithologists' Club – Clyde branch

Income & Expenditure Account for year ending 5 April 2020

Income

Sales of tea/coffee	263.79
RBS interest	1.15
Nationwide (Dunfermline) interest	- -
Total income	£264.94

Expenditure

Payment to the University for room	80.00
Tea, coffee etc	70.39
Present for Hayley Douglas	11.99
Speaker meal paid by Ian Fulton, see receipt	26.25
Total expenditure	£188.63

increase in funds for the year £76.31

Opening balances:	Nationwide	£13,463.14	
	RBS	£2,249.82	£15,712.96

Closing balances:	Nationwide	£13,463.14	
	RBS	£2,281.53	£15,789.27

Notes: £8,791 plus interest = £8,859.70 of our funds are represented by two remaining grants received in recent years for specific projects- BAA (Signage) and BS3 (Clyde Atlas). This is classed as 'restricted use'.

We also hold two Laptops purchased some years ago to facilitate bird report production. The following stock is held for future use- 8 SOC pin badges and £2.24 worth of postage stamps.

Accounts prepared by Liz Parsons, Branch Treasurer on 20th March 2020

Liz Parsons - Treasurer, Clyde Branch SOC