

AGM MINUTES 2013

Saturday 8th June 2013 at Abbots well Hotel, Chester

Present:

Lord Home, President
Martyn Howat, Chairman
Members, supporters and guests of the Association

Minute Secretary: Amanda Taylor

The Chief Executive called the meeting to order and asked Philippa Bursey to make administrative announcements prior to the start of the meeting. Those present were informed that the meeting was being recorded to assist in the preparation of the minutes. Speakers from the floor were asked to wait for the roving microphone and to give their names. Supporters were reminded that although they could speak, they had no voting rights. Luncheon and emergency evacuation procedures were outlined.

The President opened the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Davy Stinson, Noel Hulmston, Tony Laws, Robert Coe(?), John Harradine, David de Gernier, Alisdair Troup, Arthur Thirwell, Peter Wilson MBE, David Gray, Steve Bloomfield, Martyn Parfitt, Sir Roger Jones, Mike Hardy, Alan Balfour, Meurig Rees and Richard Playle.

The Chief Executive paid tribute to prominent members of the Association who had passed away in the last 12 months: Bill Morris, Michael Pass, Bill Eves, Frank Palenski, Dr Keith Tappin, John Couch, Dave Nichols, Professor Geoffrey Matthews, Ken Brereton, George Badkin, and David Trevanion. A few moments of silence were observed in their memory.

2. President's Address

Lord Home: Thank you, Richard, and may I add my own welcome to all of you today. Thank you very much for coming.

Sometimes this part of the country isn't very easy to get to, except perhaps if you are coming from London or Bangor, when the train seems to work. I forget which Archbishop of Canterbury it was who when asked whether he would go to heaven, he said, "I don't mind where I go, provided I don't have to change at Crewe".



Today marks the end of one long chapter in our history and the beginning of a new one. With the possible exception of God and Allah, we all get older, and the time has finally come for John Swift to retire and to hand over to Richard Ali. It is very hard to find appropriate words and enough superlatives to describe what a fantastic job John has done for BASC and for our membership. One obvious but huge achievement was to ensure that BASC has survived through some very difficult times, and not only has it survived but membership now stands at a record level. That means that John not only had the right ideas to encourage the shooting fraternity to join the Association, but he also chose a group of executives who have worked with and for him for the benefit of our 130,000 members.

Picking people is a great art. In America we have seen several Presidents, such as Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter and George Bush Jnr, none of whom would be God's candidate for Mensa, but they chose very good people to work with them and America prospered during their tenure of office. I don't know if John ever tried to become a member of Mensa and had he done so, he would no doubt have sailed through, but throughout that time John, through leadership and example and the ability to attract the right people has meant that the Association has gone from strength to strength. I don't believe there is any greater tribute that one could give to anyone.

I was lucky enough to be brought up in a shooting family. With a father and four uncles, all of whom shot very well, one learned to be very quick or else whatever one was shooting at was dead before one lifted one's gun. I have to say this was a cause of some frustration at the age of 15 and led to some friction. I soon learned, however, that shooting families teach each other a great deal. Safety, politeness, a love of the countryside, and an understanding of animals and birds are but a few examples. We in the BASC are a family; our membership is a family. We don't always agree, arguments do happen and will continue to happen, but we must always remember that we are not perfect and must learn from others in the same way as we can teach them, and we can learn and teach each other.

Your executive has done a great deal to bring together shooting associations, and this will help co-operation with such bodies as the Shoot Summit, the British Shooting Sports Council and the Standing Conference on Country Sports. All of these are bodies which can help us and we can help and teach them. We do actually have two common enemies. Obviously, the League Against Cruel Sports but also Brussels. We need to work with them, we need to teach them and we need to learn from other organisations, for even everyone in BASC cannot be experts in everything. I was delighted to hear that Richard has already set up of meetings with Barney White-Spunner of the Countryside Alliance and a dialogue is starting with GWCT.

Richard comes from a different background to John and has spent time in the commercial world. I am very pleased that he has, for he will bring to us an even greater degree of discipline and corporate governance than we have had possibly in the past. I have been associated with several different organisations which were run by enthusiastic amateurs and that, ladies and gentlemen, is unacceptable in this age of professionalism and – that awful word – transparency. We have to run ourselves with due regard both to our staff and our members, and we have to be sure that we are financially able to look after both of their interests. If anything happened to the



Association, we have to make sure that these people are protected. Transparency and accountability are two very tiresome buzz words but we have to live with them, we have to comply with them, and I know that Richard will be addressing both. Richard, we wish you the very best of luck for the future.

I mentioned earlier that we live in a difficult environment. Both in the UK and beyond our shores, there are some warning lights and some difficult times ahead. We have seen the horrors of Syria, with so many people killed and the use of chemical and other weapons. I came back from Singapore on Wednesday, where the worries about North Korea are considerable, and the hope is that it is only posturing but it could get worse, for they have a very young and inexperienced leader. The problems of the Euro still face us, and here the Coalition have found a considerable number of banana skins (or perhaps I should say Cornish pasties) on which to slip. I don't think that the media or indeed some Conservative Members of Parliament realise quite how difficult it is to run a coalition, and David Cameron is finding it, obviously, extremely hard so to do. Sadly, the Coalition is not like the family that I was talking to you about before, but it is a marriage which knows is going to lead to divorce, and that can't be satisfactory. I have to say I would really prefer that that divorce came sooner rather than later, and I have encouraged the Prime Minister to engineer a defeat in Parliament by coming up with some proposals which the Liberal Party can't accept, and that would lead to a defeat in a vote, would lead to a vote of confidence on the same issue, and that would inevitably lead to a General Election. At least then we would know where we were going, because at present we seem to be living in rather a vacuum.

We don't know what will happen to a lot of issues currently facing the Association, what any new government would think about lead shot, snares, pest control and new diseases. These are all factors which we have yet to face. They are challenges and I am sure Richard and his team will take them on with complete confidence. I trust that they won't have the same problem as the man accused of poaching in Pakistan, who appeared in court and said to the Judge, "I am innocent, as God is my witness", to which the Judge dryly replied, "Shouldn't you be represented by somebody better known in this country?"

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

3. Outgoing Chief Executive's and Incoming Chief Executive's Address

John Swift: My Lord President, dear friends, good morning. I must say, it's been a great relief not to have to organise this Annual General Meeting and to prepare all the paperwork.

When I was talking with Martyn Howat at the beginning of the year, I suggested, and he kindly agreed, that I might say a few words in reflection on the past 25 years. But before I do that it should not be forgotten that I have been Chief Executive during nine out of the past 12 months as well.

First however I thank the Council and Chairman for a magnificent reception in London at the Naval and Military Club on Thursday last. Thank you for that, because it too marked a changing of the guard. It was an opportunity to see many old friends who have made BASC what it is today. It was a special pleasure to meet up again with Mary Anderton and Dr Pamela Harrison. I was phoned the other day by Brian



Hughes who was Bill Harriman's predecessor as Director of Firearms. He made the point that "We all stand on somebody else's shoulders and try and do just a bit better". I certainly stood on John Anderton's shoulders and Jeffery Harrison's shoulders – and the shoulders of many others.

I say again, as I said on Thursday evening, how much I owe to my wife, Liz and the family. They have supported me through the 25 years and longer. Some moments have been a bit tricky but, nonetheless, we are here and all much stronger as a result.

A special and generous presentation was made on Thursday to mark my 25 years as Chief Executive and it should be recorded at this AGM. Nigel Brown was the Association's Honorary Legal Adviser more years ago than I care to remember. He is also the author of "London Gunmakers" published by Christie's Books. He has presented us with a historically significant George Daw patent double barrel hammer shotgun from the 1860s. This was the first British design to use centrefire tubed cartridge ammunition similar to today's. I hope that it will find its way to be mounted alongside the Lancaster 14 bore in the Duke of Westminster Hall, which Nigel Brown presented to honour John Anderton.

I am particularly pleased also to see my long-serving and long-suffering personal assistant, Sheila Potter, here today. I am only now discovering now how difficult it is to run one's own life. Sheila, we thank you very much. I could not have done the Chief Executive's job without your painstaking support. And I know Tracy Fredriksen will do exactly the same for Richard as we go forward. So thank you.

Thursday was about people and friends of the WAGBI-BASC family. Today is a business day. It's about discharge of responsibility, transparency and accountability. It is the moment for me to sign-off and for Richard Ali to sign in – of formal handover to Richard.

I am proud to be handing over an excellent organisation, in good heart, with a clear sense of purpose, as well as a strong financial balance sheet and rising membership. Go for it, Richard and good luck!

In the next few minutes, with your indulgence, I shall first say a word or two about the year since last June. It has been a challenging time for all my colleagues. I shall then reflect on some thoughts covering the 25-year perspective.

So the year to date: it is obviously a pleasure to be able to sign off, I hope you will agree, another good set of figures for the year ended 2012. But I can say without shadow of doubt that it was a tough time. Change is always tough, and I give full tribute to all my colleagues who have made it a success.

I reflect back on the President's words to me when we started discussing my retirement and the search for a successor. He said, "John, you will learn to understand that when you're retiring, nobody is in the least bit interested in what you've got to say." That was when you were retiring, Sir, and I see six years later you are still in post: but I respect that you are subject to higher authority.



Whether you are interested or not I would like to pay tribute to Jane Harris's memory and contribution. Jane was our Head of HR. She gallantly kept going through her battle with cancer but sadly died during the course of the year. Her assistants, Debbie Owen and Joanne Ford, who throughout worked with and supported her, did a marvellous job at a time when huge change was going on in our organisation.

I would like to thank Philippa Bursey, the Director of Business Management, without sparing her blushes. Philippa is one of those people for whom nothing is ever too much trouble. If anyone has a problem Philippa will put in the hours and the miles to solve it. I know that your office light does not turn off until very late in the evening. Many people in this room could not have done what they did without what you have done for them.

I also thank Christopher Graffius, Director of Communications. Christopher is one of those people who will pick up the phone to anyone, and if they won't pick up the phone, or if they slam the door in his face, he comes in through the window. If you want something done, Christopher will do it. And probably if you don't want something done he will also do it - if he thinks it's necessary.

I cannot mention everybody but take this opportunity to thank Tim Russell, Director of Conservation, who has been a great support during the course of the year. He has managed a diverse portfolio of responsibilities, taken on a number of special tasks with success, proved to be a brutal negotiator for members' interests – underneath his deceptively calm exterior - and displays professional care for all.

John Harradine, Director of Research, who I know is not here today, is another with whom I have worked for many years. During the past year he has contributed a huge amount on the lead shot and ammunition issue. By his rigour and integrity he has made himself distrusted by vested interests on both sides of the argument! This is completely wrong and unfair but goes with being a senior member of the BASC staff. John is a very fine and knowledgeable person, along with Matt Ellis, who has been supporting him.

Steve Bloomfield, Director of the English Regions, is not here either. Steve has stepped up to the plate and helped us achieve better direction and strength into the English regions where there is now a new young team of professionals. And I pay tribute also to Dr Colin Shedden, with whom I have worked for many, many years up in Scotland; and I'm delighted to see that Tommy Mayne has at last turned round the membership direction of travel in Northern Ireland; he also has been doing a first-class job.

David Ilsley, Head of Membership Marketing, has provided the energy and drive behind our membership recruitment. His enthusiasm is infectious and he has been an indispensable part of the team – not least because if there is a bit of argument going you can be confident that David is in there sorting it out. Thank you very much for that, David.

And of course there is the back office: the often unsung heroes behind those who are in the frontline. But there is one special person who I want to name and it's you, John Walkman. Thank you for helping to keep us all safe; and thank you for doing all those small things which have been so helpful and important.



What are the achievement highlights of the year? Apart from keeping the organisation going forward while waiting for change, we produced good figures in terms of finance and membership. We saw continuing growth in output and quality from the Communications team. We drove forward in the English regions. Tommy turned Northern Ireland membership around. We have done a lot with IT and developing IT applications across the organisation. We started that process of governance reform in accordance with the Sport and Recreation Alliance Voluntary Code of Good Governance. We drove forward on the conservation front with Greenshoots mapping going from strength to strength. We have set some challenging ambitions with “best practice”, and are welcoming a wider constituency of people into shooting sports.

What are my reflections on the past 25 years?

When we started all that time ago, the organisation was arguably insolvent. The John Anderton Building had been commissioned and we had red figures from wall to wall. Simon (Cussons), you were the Chairman at the time and I can remember you joking that there's nothing like knocking your head against an overdraft ceiling to make people focus on economy. Together in 1988 we set out to get some capital background into the organisation and it took until about 1994 to get the organisation into a satisfactorily healthier financial position.

Of course, I think – and I say this with the Auditor, Jill Jones, sitting over there – that the organisation is much wealthier than the book value. That is not just in terms of goodwill from 130,000 members but also, for example, that there is an underwriter prepared to support the Association to the tune of at least £10 million, on the table, to cover just one event of negligence. The commercial value of *Shooting & Conservation* Britain's largest circulation shooting title doesn't appear on the books either. Our country shows and events have significant brand value and turnover. It is vital never to forget that the organisation is worth a huge amount more than appears on the books.

Over the past 25 years we have seen membership growth against benchmark figures: magazines and benchmark organisations have been struggling, doing everything they possibly can to attract membership through cut-price deals and so on. BASC has not followed suit and membership has gone on increasing. It's a bit like a tree: the rings are a bit wider some years and a bit narrower in others.

We have done a huge amount to bring young people into shooting sports. The numbers of Young Shots events around the country is now significant. More women are coming into shooting; lady gamekeepers are not uncommon. People from all backgrounds and walks of life, that wouldn't have expected to come into shooting before, can now do so. This is all about diversity and being welcoming: rather than relying on the historically traditional areas of support.

We have also widened and deepened the professional expertise in the organisation. The expertise in the firearms team nowadays is huge and second to none thanks in no small measure to Bill Harriman, Director of Firearms. The expertise in Glynn Evans's team, in gamekeeping and game, is huge; Alan McCormick's deer stalking – across the countries and the regions, on the Council - if you look at it, the expertise is wide and deep right across the organisation.



I am particularly proud that we have maintained a whole-UK operation. A number of organisations either weren't whole-UK or started to split up and go their separate ways. In contrast we have built an organisation with enough joint between the carriages to allow national ambitions and expectations to have their play. This means that decisions are taken close to the people they affect; but it also maintains a cohesion which has served the organisation and our cause well. It helps hugely to have a whole-UK operation.

We have been through a technology revolution. Some of my staff colleagues will remind me that I once said "These mobile telephones will never catch on," as I turned down an application from somebody who wanted one. We did actually have computers before 25 years ago, but we have been through that whole process and are now market leaders. 25 years ago we wouldn't have guessed we would be where we are now.

We have constructed and built a Communications Centre which is state of the art and I pay tribute to Robert Irvine's professional support and as Chairman during that project.

We have been unfazed by some pretty scurrilous and disreputable competition for our members. The organisation has shown itself to be mature and grown up enough to keep its eyes in its own boat, to use a competitive rowing phrase. We have stuck to core principles and values and they have served us well.

One of the things that I set out to ensure, again thanks to Simon Cussons, throughout the 25 years have been five strategic objectives.

All-party support is the first. We have set out to win friends and understanding. We made the organisation "part of the solution not a problem". We have encouraged people to place one foot in our camp in the hope that the other one will follow soon after. We have not set out to caricature as enemies those with whom we may disagree. If you invent or manufacture enemies they eventually become real ones. Our goal has been that of bringing people into understanding of our sport.

Our second strategic objective has been to ensure a balance of opinion in the media. One will never achieve total support and a fair balance is sufficient. Simon Clarke, Head of Press and Media has brought real professionalism to our efforts.

Our third objective was to ensure opportunity for people to go shooting. We have continued successfully through Firearms, Bill; through your work in land management, Tim, and through maintaining sustainable harvestable quarry to make sure people have had access to shooting.

Fourthly we have striven for high standards. I hope that the Association will continue to show zero tolerance for those who do not obey the law or our codes of practice. It is easy to wobble off this principle and some organisations have.

Lastly the fifth and I put it last – last but not least – is the strong voice for shooting. Strength of voice comes last, after all the other things that we do. It is the actions that speak louder than words. It does not come first.



We have faced many controversial issues during the 25 years, and I shall mention just a few of them.

The first was “big bags”. Some of us will remember that very large bags became a problem as the result of city money coming into the sport. Under Jack Carter’s leadership we took this on and were immediately, and quite wrongly, accused by vested interests of trying to impose bag limits. I make no apology for having started that argument and having helped to drive down the tendency for very large bags to be accepted as part of the sporting ethos. They are not. And while the public will in the main accept and tolerate the principle of hunting, they will not do so if we show blatant disregard for the fact that we are harvesting a living quarry. We place ourselves on the wrong side of public understanding. Of course, there are many different arguments but we can say with confidence that expectations on bags have come down.

We had to deal with lead shot ammunition from those very early days. I have been working with lead for 40 years. All I would say on this occasion is that shooting sports must think very carefully about what their right course of action is.

I continue as Chairman of the DEFRA FSA Lead Ammunition Group so I am careful what I say, but if you try to defend lead on the grounds that it is “just another metal” and moreover kid yourself that it’s not a potential problem, you are not doing your case any favours. Lead is a nasty poison. Shooting needs to think very carefully about the impacts of using a poisonous substance in recreational activity, and where that could lead in the future.

Then we had all that stuff in the early 1990s about the loss of the bird pest schedule, Part 2 of Schedule 2 of the 1981 Act, and the introduction of licences and derogations. We were instrumental in finding that solution which provides the foundation for pest control to this day. The lesson there, my Lord President, was that Brussels, as you say, had to be watched like a hawk; but with goodwill and some fairly complicated deals it was possible to make sure we can carry out what you want to do. The fact is that we could be successful because of co-operation and understanding across a wide spectrum of stakeholder interests.

We of course had that deeply misconceived “pest control day” some 10 years later. It kicked off with a crazy scheme to give prizes for killing the most pests in a day; including seagulls off chimney pots in Brighton. A stated goal was to get a mention in the Guinness Book of Records. Jeffrey Olstead, who was then running our press office, is not here today, but he said some rather intemperate things and that caused a bit of a row. BASC was once again pilloried once again, this time of being against pigeon shooting.

We had “the merger debate” on and off over the years. I remember being approached back in 1994 by Charles Goodson-Wickes, then chairman of the BFSS, and Lord Peel who was chairman of GCT to that end. Peter Misselbrook who was BASC chairman and I put in a lot of hours to develop a detailed workable plan and I can say it now: I believe that our proposals might well have brought the two organisations together; but they were rejected by the fox hunting interest. It was not to be.



The Hunting Act followed in 2004. We turned out and supported the hunting fraternity at every event, rally and march. I spoke at every one of them in support of hunting. But that did not stop the hunting world turning on BASC for winning the amendments which made sure that shooting and gundog work were protected. Christopher was the author of that success.

Then we had “laying cages”. Do you remember that? This again is about commercialisation, standards and values in sport. To my mind it doesn’t matter whether an activity is big and financially based, so long as it is open, clean, transparent and well managed. Your game farm can be very big and so long as it is run properly and openly, that is fine. The problem at the start of the laying cages argument, which involved a new technique, was the prevalence of appalling standards. BASC did shooting a good favour by taking that issue on with the inevitable flak from the vested interests once again. But your sport is stronger for our having taken on that challenge.

What were the missed opportunities during those 25 years? The only bit that I really failed on big time was to fail to achieve 200,000 members. That cost me an eye-wateringly expensive lunch with Jonathan Young, who had told me that I wouldn’t do it. In hindsight 200,000 members was never on the cards. It would take a real change in the weather, such as compulsion to be a member, or statutory tests to shoot. Those are routes down which the sport probably doesn’t have to go if it makes self-regulation work.

The loss of pistol shooting and hand guns was a huge missed opportunity. There was a moment in the House of Lords, my Lord President, when the shooting world had come together to move amendments to the Government Bill allowing their “disassembly”; in other words storing key components in separate secure places. Our supportive peers were signed up to moving the amendment on disassembly. It would have enabled hand guns to continue in safe use. It was a matter of huge regret that Lord Kimble went directly from that meeting to the floor of the House and undertook that he would support the government and would not be moving any amendments. As chairman of the Firearms Consultative Committee the game was up. That was the moment when handguns were lost. That was a massive missed opportunity. Such is politics. Do you remember that, Bill?

So the future?

By 2050 there will be another 2 billion people in the world. Climate change, whatever clever words Matt Ridley uses, will have profoundly unpredictable effects. There will be huge competition for rural land space as food production intensifies. Our sport depends on rural land space and what people do with it.

Climate change and rising sea levels will alter the coasts and wildlife distribution and migration. This will happen during the working lives of some people in this room – during the same timescale I have been working with the Association, 40 years – the mere blink of an eye.

There will be huge challenges. It is absolutely right that the organisation should have a kick up the bottom by the new Chief Executive.



But I do hope with all my heart that the Association continues to see itself as part of the solution and doesn't regress as one or two other organisations have, to opposing change at every turn. This was never the ethos of Stanley Duncan, Jeffery Harrison or John Anderton.

I hope that BASC remains a constructive, forward looking and inspirational organisation. How often have I heard it said "BASC is an organisation that you can do business with" - that tells the truth - is prepared to take on the difficult issues, even if it costs a few bruises on the way.

My Lord President, thank you for allowing me to take up your time. I thank you all for your friendship during the time that I have been with you.

As I emailed Richard when I first was allowed his email address, I said, "If you have half as much fun doing the job as I have had, you won't have made a mistake."

Richard Ali: My Lord President, members, friends, and colleagues, firstly, I would like to add my thanks to John Swift and to Liz for their magnificent service to the Association over all these years. I would also like to say a personal thank you for the absolutely wonderful six weeks we spent together for an induction period for someone that hadn't shot for 20 years. It was first-rate and thank you very much from the bottom of my heart for that.

I agree with the President's view: shooting is a family, and I would like to thank all of you for welcoming me into that that family. It really feels like coming home. Thank you.

I would also like to thank Council, BASC members and BASC staff. Council has left me in no doubt about the work that needs to be done and the help and support that they will provide. Members have been uniformly welcoming as I have met them around the country, and I have been travelling around the country; my wife will testify to that. Their passion for the sport is absolutely inspiring. Our staff are exceptional and I'm looking forward to working with them to achieve the Association's objectives.

So to the work. The next stage of the job is to ensure that we can continue to both defend and promote shooting in what we all know is a rapidly changing world. We're going through a media revolution; political change – Lord Home – can be swift. New issues, new evidence and new threats will need to be confronted, dealt with and managed, and I'm looking forward to working with all of you to meet all these challenges, but also to seize new opportunities.

I want to leave you in no doubt of our priorities for the Association. I want to see this Association as one which puts its members first. You are all at the heart of what we do every single day. I want to work co-operatively with others because I believe that increases our strength. I want to see a world-class organisation, one that is recognised for its authority, its expertise, its credibility and its evidence base.

Thank you all.



4. Awards and Presentations

The President asked the Chief Executive to announce the presentation of awards.

The Ian Richardson Trophy

The Ian Richardson Trophy is awarded annually to the person who, in the view of BASC employees, has done the most for the Association in recent years.

James Reynolds, aged 17 at the time, set up a successful petition and Facebook campaign and helped gather the support of over 12,000 shooters across the UK against WH Smith's decision to stop children from buying shooting magazines.

The trophy was awarded to James Reynolds by the President.

The Tim Sedgwick Trophy

The Tim Sedgwick Trophy is presented to a person who, in the opinion of Council, has contributed markedly to the fortunes of BASC and who is not a Council member or a member of an advisory committee.

David Gray is a retired wildfowler who recognised the importance of shooting groups buying land for shooting and conservation and suggested a fund to help in this regard, which had led to the creation of the Wildlife Habitat Trust.

As he was not able to be present at the meeting, the trophy had been presented to David by the WHT trustees on 21 May.

The Stanley Duncan Conservation Trophy

The Stanley Duncan Conservation Trophy was awarded to Rockland Wildfowlers Club. The trophy was presented to Malcolm Huggins, Chairman, and Charles Dowding, Treasurer, Rockland Wildfowlers, by the President.

Malcolm Huggins gave an illustrated presentation on the conservation work of the club on their recently purchased marshland at Rockland Broad.

Special Presentations

Special presentations were awarded by the President to:

Des Green

Des has been invaluable to the deer stalking membership, having been involved with the stalking scheme at King's Forest for the last 8 years, conducting deer stalking outings and ensuring members obtain the maximum benefit and enjoyment from them. He has been a BASC member for almost 25 years.



Bruce and Elaine Marks

Bruce and Elaine have been demonstrating best practice with their working ferrets in professional pest control at BASC events since 2005. Their ferret section on the Young Shots days is memorable for a lot of youngsters, who are riveted by Bruce and Elaine's first-class communication skills.

Tim Callaway

Tim, an invaluable supporter of BASC, has worked as a volunteer at numerous shows and events throughout the Midlands region. Hard-working and dependable, Tim has been an asset to the Midlands region for almost a decade.

David Conway and Jim Spalding

David and Jim were nominated for completing the work started by James Dorrington to restore the Payne-Gallwey Holland & Holland punt gun, currently on display in the Duke of Westminster Hall.

Bill Harriman gave a brief talk on the history of the gun and its link to BASC.

Helen and Steve Crick

Helen and Steve put on scurries for the Midlands and Welsh regions and organise teams of volunteers to assist. Helen has also helped at Crufts for the past three years and this year ran the invitation scurry for BASC.

Doug Conroy and Roger Evans

Doug Conroy and Roger Evans are members of the Pembrokeshire Wildfowlers' Association and were nominated for their hard work and commitment to wildfowling and their longstanding committee membership. Doug has been a BASC member for over 29 years and Roger Evans for over 25 years.

5. Chairman's Report

The President invited the Chairman to report.

The Chairman presented longstanding Council member and previous Chairman Robert Irvine with a decanter to mark his retirement.

Martyn Howat: My Lord President, ladies and gentlemen, firstly, my Lord President, can I thank you for your service and support to the Association again over the past year. We welcome your sage advice, we welcome your calm counsel to the Association, and we are very grateful for your support.

The last year, ladies and gentlemen, has been an exciting and indeed remarkable one for your Association. I will attempt to give you a view of some of the significant developments which have taken place.



Firstly, however, I want to say a huge thank you to our retiring Chief Executive, John Swift, who you all know so well. Secondly, I want to give a warm welcome to our new Chief Executive, Richard Ali.

Back to John for a moment, if I may. We heard a lot from John in his address earlier but I will try and summarise a few more thoughts about John Swift and his contribution to our Association. John has led BASC, the largest and arguably the most successful voluntary shooting organisation, since 1988. It is probably the most remarkable and successful shooting association anywhere in the world. He has made an outstanding, significant and distinctive contribution to shooting, rural life, and conservation on a national and indeed international scale. He has spent a lot of time in Europe, he knows the Europeans, with the legislation coming from Europe, with so much control coming from Europe, John's knowledge and expertise in that area has been second to none.

His work has required vision, moral courage, hard work, leadership – often lonely, John, but honestly you weren't ever alone; we were all there behind you.

Going back to his beginnings, John joined WAGBI in 1972 as a Conservation Officer. He was an adviser to the EC on the Birds Directive. We have heard about general licences. On a European level he played a key role as ambassador for the high standards promoted by BASC. Under his leadership BASC has become a respected force in conservation. Make no mistake: the blend of conservation and shooting is our strength. He has developed close and highly effective working relationships with agencies and political parties, and I've seen much of that. He has launched Greenshoots, and we've heard of Greenshoots, an increasingly important product that links shooting and conservation, and if you haven't looked at it yourselves, I encourage you to do so. It is a wonderfully powerful tool and it is helpful in the management of shoots on all sorts of levels, not just on wildlife. You can even put your drives on there and your stands on there and where your feeders are and so forth. It's really great.

Codes of practice: John was responsible for codes of practice, for deer stalking qualifications, the Deer Initiative; all created under John. Collaborative working with other field sports organisations and rural bodies – not always an easy job, that. It's not always easy working with other organisations. I liked your analogy of one foot in and then see if the other one follows. It doesn't always but sometimes getting that first foot in is a really difficult job.

John of course oversaw the construction of the communications building, which we all celebrate so much.

Judge Bishopp said of BASC: "In my judgment, it is an inescapable conclusion that, without BASC's campaigning, advisory, educational and land management activities, sporting shooting in the United Kingdom in all its forms would be of materially poorer quality, and in some forms would not exist at all."

One of John's greatest achievements, in my view, however, is the staff. He has been responsible for building a remarkable staff base. We have about 115 staff. In amongst those 115 people we have a tremendous knowledge of sporting shooting and the range of skills required to run an Association like ours. To my mind, they are our greatest asset.



We don't say farewell to John entirely, of course. He is going to continue his work as Chairman of the Lead Ammunition Group, work for BASC on FACE, and he will be in the wings to help and advise, and become sage-like into the future. I very much hope, however, you find some time to enjoy your newfound freedom, shooting, of course, and also I know your passion for diving. Thank you, John, from us all. We wish you well.

Now I come to John's successor, Richard Ali. First, Richard, I have to tell you one thing. We expect no less from you. Richard comes to us from a solid rural, business and food background. He has a great deal of experience of leading associations and is highly skilled and experienced in the political arena. He comes to us with clear leadership qualities. He was the unanimous choice of Council from a very strong field indeed.

Richard has hit the ground running, and I have to tell you he's hit quite a few clays. I also have to tell you I asked him earlier today how well he slept last night and he said, "I kept waking up, and then when I was asleep I was dreaming about clays." So you can tell he is truly becoming one of us! The only comment I would make, Richard, is there are other things that young men should dream about however.

One of his recent achievements has been that he went and addressed the National Gamekeepers Organisation. Any members of the National Gamekeepers Organisation in the audience? Thank you, so I know how hostile or not my audience might be. They are a fairly eclectic mix of people and they were absolutely enthralled by his presentation and hearing what he had to say, and he went a long way to forming new alliances and friendships there. Well done.

As Richard has said himself, he has been around all of the offices and so forth, both in the English regions, the five English offices, and also in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and that has been really supportive to the staff and very informative for him in discovering what they do and what their needs and issues are. We know that Richard is going to take BASC from strength to strength, building on John's solid foundations. BASC did well to attract somebody of Richard's calibre. You are most welcome, Richard, and we look forward to working with you, and wish you every success.

Now I want to say something about staff. I wish to pay tribute to the staff of the Association. Their skills are outstanding, their commitment enormous, the efforts they make on our behalf have helped us to enjoy the sport we love so much, and I know you will want to join me in saying thanks to each and every one of them for all that they have done for us over the past year.

Over the past year I too have visited the far-flung BASC country and regional offices. Some of these, I have to tell you, are tucked away in dark forests or in and around bustling cities. Like Marford Mill, they are staffed by committed, skilled, highly motivated people. They work right at the coalface, serving members' needs and providing services such as events, attending shows, arranging training for members and the like. In the country offices they add to all of this by working closely with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies to real effect. They are doing a fantastic job and they deserve our recognition and thanks also.



Now a few words about BASC Council. As your Chairman, I have been determined to ensure that John's achievements are built on. We have firm foundations, deep roots, and we must take care to maintain that history, but also move the Association on into the future and be appropriate for today. We are incredibly fortunate to have the support of a dedicated team of Council members. They're all volunteers, who form a body of expertise on all aspects of sporting shooting. They are passionate about the sport, equally passionate about BASC as an organisation, and it has truly been a privilege to act as their Chairman for the past year. We have worked as a team, and dealt with complex issues in a highly strategic fashion, reaching consensus, and that has been incredibly rewarding.

Working with Council's advice and support, we aim to work with like-minded organisations for the benefit of shooting. This approach is already bearing fruit, as you have heard from others. Through co-operation on shared principles, we are much stronger. We aim to ensure that the BASC brand is fit for purpose – it is a very powerful brand, the BASC brand, and don't ever under-value it. It is well known and well respected. We want to ensure that BASC benefits its members, who are the lifeblood of the Association. We need to build on the expertise and the professionalism of the staff. I would like to thank Council for their tireless efforts. They deserve our recognition too.

Remember that Council members change, and there are normally new members joining each year, and we will be going through the election process in a moment. You elect them. Please be prepared to stand yourself or encourage others to stand, and make sure that you vote. Not enough of our members take advantage of their rights in this respect.

The past year your Association has consolidated our all-party work. Only a couple of weeks ago, at a meeting with a senior government minister, he said to me, "BASC is well thought of in Westminster." I wonder how many organisations like BASC are well thought of in Westminster. That is a tremendous credit. We have taken MPs shooting and taken shooting to Parliament in the form of the shooting simulator. We challenged the MCZ proposals in England, with particular regard to the reference areas, and those have now been dropped. We have continued to fight the airgun legislation in Scotland, where the timetable for restrictions has now been abandoned. We have mobilised the shooting family to oppose WH Smith's attempt to treat shooting magazines as pornography – and well done on that petition. My only feedback to you is, I signed up to that straight away and now I get petitions on everything.

We've kept hooded crows on general licences when NE sought to remove them without consultation. We have persuaded Royal Mail to drop their proposals to ban the carriage of firearms. Currently we're working on the challenging proposals from Europe on firearms and alien species.

The future. The work of BASC doesn't end. It never will, of course. We face a challenging few years where issues such as lead, rear and release, disturbance and alien species will all affect shooting. Remember our position on lead is clear: no proven, sound scientific evidence against lead, then no change. We face political change; our all-party stance has never been so important. Together we face those changes and continue BASC's work, ensuring a solid future for sustainable shooting. With over 130,000 members, we are strong but we are never complacent.



Thank you to all our volunteers, be they trainers, or members who help out at shows and events. They contribute an enormous amount to the Association and we are indebted to them for their contribution.

Thank you to all of you for attending today's AGM, for your support in the past and for your support into the future. Enjoy your sport and good shooting to you all. Thank you very much indeed.

The President offered members the opportunity to ask questions of the Chairman. There were none.

6. Adoption of the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2012

The President invited the Chairman to present the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2012.

The Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder for the adoption of the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements for 2012. Robert Irvine proposed and John Thornley seconded the proposal from the floor. Agreed unanimously on a show of hands. The Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements were duly adopted.

7. Elections

Honorary Life Membership

Peter Wilson

Peter Wilson is the current world record holder for the double trap event, and was a member of the British team for the 2012 summer Olympics. He was the youngest competitor in the men's double trap event, where he won the gold medal. He was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire in the 2013 New Year's Honours for his services to shooting.

Michael Alldis

Michael, a former BASC Council member, has made his facilities at the Essex Shooting School available to BASC free of charge, enabling the Association to host a wide range of courses from there for Young Shots Days to Ladies Days through to DSC1 courses. Michael is also a former director of the CPSA.

By a show of hands, Peter Wilson and Michael Alldis were awarded Honorary Life Membership.



Election of Members of Council

The President invited Jill Jones of Baker Tilly, the Scrutineer, to present the results of the elections to Council for 2013.

Ballot Papers received	2012
Online voters	460
Total voters	2472
Papers received after deadline	2
Papers spoilt	58
Papers for checking and validating	2412
Papers deemed void	6
Number of valid papers	2406
Valid votes	4154

The votes from these valid papers were cast as follows in the order they appeared on the ballot paper:

M Parfitt	1,334
J Graham	1,475
D Greaves	1,345

The following were duly elected to Council: J Graham and D Greaves.

Wildlife Habitat Trust – trustees for 2013/2014

The President introduced the nominations for the election of trustees for the Wildlife Habitat Trust.

Alan Jarrett, proposed by Lee Freeston, seconded by Mike Sherman, was happy for his name to go forward. The nomination was carried by a show of hands and Alan Jarrett was duly elected.

Anthony Holliday, proposed by Thomas Gee, seconded by Matthew Cutting, was happy for his name to go forward. The nomination was carried by a show of hands and Anthony Holliday was duly elected.

8. Appointment of Auditors for 2013/2014

It was proposed that Baker Tilly UK Audit LLP be reappointed as auditors for the year ending December 2013, as recommended by Council. Carried unanimously on a show of hands.

9. Any Other Business by Leave of the Chair

There being no matters of Any Other Business raised, the President thanked those present for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 12.20 p.m.

Chairman

Date

