

MARYLEBONE BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY



45th Annual General Meeting held on Friday 18th September 2026 at 7.00 pm via Zoom

1. **Apologies:** Jean Clarke; Joyce Huggins; Andy Strouthous
2. **Attendance:** The meeting was attended by 28 members.
3. **Minutes of the last AGM held September 19th, 2025:** The minutes were accepted.
Proposed by Neville Robinson, seconded by Richard Cryan.
4. **Matters arising from the minutes:** None.
5. **Chairman's report on the Society's activities in the 25/26 season – Chairman Steve Ripley:**
See p3 for Report.
6. **Treasurer's report - Gill Irvin:** Report on accounts see p4. The surplus for 25/26 season was £3172 and the reserve is £19860. An increase in membership has helped to increase income. Coach income was £9000 with an increase in bookings of 20%. The Silver Green legacy helps to fund the lecture programme.

Approval for the accounts was proposed by Jane Clist and seconded by Barbara Luke. Discussion arose on whether prices will rise for coach trips in the coming year. Gill said that as we have good reserves, the club could cover the inevitable increasing price of coach travel in the short term. It was commented that the coach outings are increasingly popular and this is a good source of income for the club.

7. **Election of auditor/examiner:** Richard Cryan has examined the accounts and he reports that the accounts are a satisfactory record of the MBS finances. Thanks were offered to Richard for this work. The re-election of Richard Cryan as auditor was proposed by Gaye Henson and seconded by Gill Irvin.
8. **Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee representative report:** Gaye Henson reported: Quarterly meetings of the HHCC have taken place in-person at Guildhall or via on-line meetings. I have attended the majority of meetings and attended some pre-meeting walks on Hampstead Heath. It has been a difficult year for the Consultative Committee from the point of view of actually being consulted in an appropriate and timely fashion in order to feed into the Management Committee and then to the City of London Corporation.

The main issues have been the funding aspects regarding the relationship between Hampstead Heath and the City of London Corporation, advice regarding constabulary capacity on the Heath, absence of consultation around the recent cafe re-tendering process and general governance issues around the working of the Consultative Committee, the Hampstead Heath Management Committee and the City of London Corporation.

The Heath and Hampstead consultative committee appears to have a less important role in The Heath management. However, it is hoped that in the coming year this will improve. The MBS has had notable influences on changes to The Heath – The MBS has contributed to the funding of the creation of an island on the Boating Pond and it was noted that in 2026 the swans successfully bred on the island. Also, the MBS has contributed to the display boards which are positioned around The Heath.

1. Members offering themselves to be re-elected to the Committee:

- Steve Ripley Chairman
- Frances Tatnall Secretary
- Gill Irvin Treasurer
- Jean Clarke Membership Secretary
- Marion Hill Publicity/ Coach booking secretary
- Gaye Henson Indoor meeting organiser/Hampstead Heath Consultative
Committee representative
- Joyce Huggins Local meetings organiser
- Andrew Peel Coach outings leader
- Maria Kallionaki Committee member

That the above committee members were re-elected to the committee was proposed by Barbara Luke and seconded by Jane Clist.

2. Plans for the 26/27 season: Plans for the 26/27 season include our usual programme of coach outings, local trips to reserves, Zoom talks and weekly walks on Hampstead Heath. A change to membership rules will allow free membership to under 25s in the hope of attracting young birders. It is hoped that a new venture will take place in May 2027 with a night-time trip to Thursley Common to see nightjars. This trip will be subsidised by the MBS to reduce the cost of travelling as a small group in a minibus.

3. Any other business:

- Death of members: Sue Sankar – a charity donation in her memory was made to London Wildlife Trust.
- Thanks to the committee for all their harsd work was offered by Barbara Luke.

Frances Tatnall, Club Secretary

Chairman's Speech MBS AGM 2026.

Thank you, Lev, for an enjoyable talk, and thanks Gaye for your brilliant job hosting this meeting.

Whilst I am thanking Gaye, I also need to thank her for so ably covering for me last year. As many of you will know, I had been having a few heart issues last year. I am glad to say that I am now working my way back to full fitness and looking forward to taking part in all our activities in the coming year.

Talking of health, I am pleased to say that yet again the MBS is in rugged good health. We had over 160 members by the season's end, and our finances are robust, as Gill, our Treasurer, and Richard our Auditor can attest.

Over the year on the Heath we have continued to attract a great mix of people, "regulars" and guests and visitors. Our formula of informal organization and serious birding seems to be appealing, with babes-in-arms, teenage prodigies and veteran members all contributing to an enjoyable event, whatever the weather.

Our Coach trips have continued to be popular, with a good mix of members and non-members. Our new coach trip pick-up point at King's Cross has worked well, attracting around 40-46 participants to our day-long offerings of birding. It might be difficult to remember after our long extended heatwaves this summer, but the first four trips from October until February were often wet and windy. Highlights included a vivid White-Tailed Eagle taking a Canada Goose, on our first trip of the year, Keyhaven. The Redwing and Fieldfare of the winter gave way to Wheatear, Cuckoo and Nightingale as the Summer came in. On our first coach trip of the season we saw 84 bird species, and the season ended with 86 species seen at the always reliable Minsmere. We managed to get to Hampshire, Kent, Essex, Sussex and Suffolk. Huge thanks as always to Andrew Peel for leading our coach trips with his unique blend of incredible expertise and truly awful puns.

Our Local outings, admirably organized by Joyce Huggins, started last season with a visit to Rainham, as we will indeed be doing tomorrow. Maria led, bringing in a collective total of 52 species, and getting the group back to the centre in time to take part in the public consultation on the future of the visitor centre. The theme of the RSPB consolidating its energy and finances would come back again later in the year, with our group getting to RSPB Rye Meads at the end of the season for what will be a last visit to it as an RSPB Reserve. I am pleased to say that Thames water have pledged to keep public access to Rye Meads, and we will I am sure keep advocating for birders and the birds themselves in this reserve, whoever takes it over on a day-to-day basis.

Rainham was followed by Fairlop and Stockers Lake, and I am pleased to say that I helped spot the Little Owl in Regent's Park which was our collective present at the Pre-Christmas bird walk. Old favourites such as Two Tree Island and Oare Marshes were joined by our return to Blue House Farm in Essex in April, with 60 species of birds. Thanks to Joyce, Marion, Barbara, Maria and Andrew for leading these local trips.

In a full calendar we also managed to pack in two trips in conjunction with Oriole Birding. Many thanks to Toni Menezes for organizing these, Norfolk in November and Lundy Island in May.

Throughout the season Gaye continued to come up with a fascinating mixture of speakers for our Zoom meetings, taking us virtually to Scotland at the start of the year, then via Swedish Islands down as far as Panama.

Of course, none of this would be possible if it wasn't for the tireless work of Marion Hill, who beavers away behind the scenes on our Publicity, handling the website, Facebook pages, social media feeds and generally organizing us all and getting things done!

Can I also add a huge thanks to all those members of the club who have contributed to making the MBS2020 Vision Facebook page such a valuable resource. The photographs from members on the Heath, and on our Local and Coach trips help extend our reach to those who can't or don't come on our trips, and provide wonderful memories for those who do. Many thanks to Diane Dalli, David Allen, Mary Holden, Joan Chatterley, Marion Hill and Dave Porrit. Apologies If I have left anyone out!

Sadly, I have to note that Sue Sankhar, a stalwart on the Heath and on our trips and holidays, died during the year. She is much missed, and we have made a donation to the London Wildlife Trust in her memory.

As always, and especially over the last year, I have to thank everyone on the Committee for their amazing help and dedication. Jean Clarke as membership Secretary and Frances Tatnall as Secretary, Host of our Meetings and Vegan Cake-Baker extraordinary also need to be mentioned by name.

Can I conclude, as always, with wishing you all Good Health, and Happy Birding in the forthcoming season.

I look forward to seeing some of you tomorrow, when Andrew will be leading at Rainham RSPB.

P.S. I transcribed Lev Parikian's version of the call of the Goldcrest as:
"Seepida, Seepida, Seepida, Scabba Dabba Dupp".

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Marylebone Birdwatching Society - Report on the accounts for the year 2025-26

The past year has been highly successful for MBS, which is reflected in the healthy state of our finances, as shown in the annual accounts. The surplus of income over costs for the year was £3172 and reserves stand at £19,860 at the year end.

Membership fees were £2505, our highest ever level, showing a 14% increase from last year. This shows we are a thriving society with a growing membership, reflecting high levels of interest in our activities, which gives evidence of the effectiveness of our website in attracting new members.

Coach outing income was £9090, which shows a 19% increase from last year. Despite an annual increase of almost £1000 in coach hire fees and a couple of outings in poor weather, MBS made a surplus of £1855 on coach trips. As a regular on our outings, it was noticeable that coaches were generally fuller. This shows how enjoyable and well led our coach trips are, and that all the hard work involved in promoting the trips and dealing with bookings paid off.

Speaker fees were in line with previous years, given that last year's cost was artificially low due to 2 years' charges being taken from the Silver Green Fund during a single year. Silver generously left MBS a legacy to be used to fund a lecture each year.

To summarise, MBS is in excellent financial shape and there is no need to increase either membership fees or charges for coach trips. It gives us the scope to offer free membership to under 25s this year and to consider organising a subsidised minibus outing to Thursley Common.

I would like to thank former treasurer Judy Powell for a very comprehensive handover and for her support in dealing with my queries. I am also grateful to the Committee for liaising with me so efficiently as I have taken on the role of Treasurer, and to Richard Cryan for continuing to be Independent Financial Examiner for MBS.

Gill Irvin 23.8.26