**Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee of the National Pigeon Association of Great Britain held Sunday 12 February 2017 at the Premier Inn, Colorado Way, Wakefield, West Yorkshire**

Meeting commenced at 13:00

Present: Mark Rudd, President (MR); Evan Murray, Chairman (EM); Graham Bates (GB); Richard Henderson (RH); Paul Littlewood (PL); Jim Mullan (JM); Colin Ronald (CR); and Miss Helen Seed (HS)

In attendance: John S Harrison, Secretary/Treasurer.

Observing: Mr W Telford.

1/ Chairman’s Welcome:

The Chairman, Evan Murray, welcomed all committee members to the first meeting of 2017, congratulating GB, RH & HS on their re-election and JM on his election to the Committee. EM asked that the committee work together and put aside any personal differences, there were several contentious items on the agenda and he hoped that they could be discussed without animosity, adding that he would not hesitate to step in and close discussion if necessary.

At this point the Secretary raised a point of order and asked whether proxy votes were accepted within the National Committee. After some discussion, there was unanimous agreement that proxy votes would not be accepted.

2/ Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Graham Giddings, John Surridge, Vice-President; and Gary Eaton. It was agreed that as Gary Eaton was unable to attend meetings due to ill health he no longer be included on the committee circulation list. EM, on behalf of the Committee sent the wish that during 2017 Gary would have improved health.

3/ Election of Chairman:

RH proposed Paul Littlewood as Chairman, seconder GB

CR proposed Evan Murray, seconder MR

A paper ballot was held, EM received 5 votes and PL 3 votes, EM was therefore elected.

4/ Minutes of meeting held September18th 2016:

HS (item 8c) asked was RH/PL happy with the wording regarding cancellation and they stated that they were, HS asked that the word ‘elsewhere’ be changed to ‘at another championship show’ as it could be misinterpreted by those not involved in the discussion.

HS requested an amendment to 8d, she said that she had asked that Breed Clubs give a reason for removing a judge; it was pointed out that this was already minuted and that she was using the first draft of the minutes. HS said that she wanted it minuting that at the September meeting she had suggested that a box be included on the Club Return Form asking for the reason a Judge was being deleted but those present did not feel it was necessary. PL agreed that there should be a valid reason given for removing a judge. EM concurred pointing out that the NPA Committee ‘looks at the larger picture whereas Breed Clubs see the specific breed’. MR said that it’s ‘our Judging List’ and that Breed Clubs only ‘feed into it’. There was unanimous agreement that Clubs must give a reason for removing a judge and that ‘not being a Club Member’ wasn’t acceptable.

5/ Matters arising:

RH asked whether the insurance cover (item 9) had been increased. The Secretary confirmed that the cover had been raised to £5m.

RH asked whether all shows had submitted schedules (item 8a), the Secretary said that he had received all schedules for approval but noted that several were received after the schedule was circulated.

GB (item 7c) apologised and said that due to building disruptions he had been unable to write the article.

HS (item 7c) asked whether the Secretary had contacted members for photographs and details of champions for the website. The Secretary confirmed that he had emailed members. HS said this needs chasing up as the Working Party’s idea needs expanding on the website.

HS (item 11) queried whether 98 copies of the Book of Standards had been sold and questioned the income and asked that the Secretary review the sales. The Secretary said that he had sold many copies at the shows he had attended and sent out many more following the publication of the December issue of FPW the total income being £511; additionally, copies had been donated to all championship shows. He said he would report back on the total sales of BoS. GB said that he wasn’t certain that the figure he had given was correct. The Secretary said that following the publication of FPW, he had after discussing it with the Chairman made refunds to two recent purchasers who had complained that the price had been reduced by £15.

6/ Committee decisions made between meetings

GB said that as agreed by the Committee Denise McKeating would be taking over as editor of FPW.

The meeting held at Reading was discussed.

HS said that there were 3 areas which must be included, (1) MR’s bullet points, (2) the minutes taken by PL, and (3) items added by HS. EM said that the minutes of the meeting must reflect the discussion held at Reading and represent the majority decision.

PL said that Committee members should not accept ring orders or membership form from members but should tell them to post it to the Secretary – asking who is responsible if they go astray? RH agreed that of course Committee members should be approachable but that all correspondence must be sent to the Secretary and that as Committee members they should not accept ring orders, membership or money from members.

HS said that the Ring Secretary should be present at as many shows as possible and stressed that the Ring Secretary should be “more accessible”. HS said that by saying the Ring Secretary only need to be present at the National the Committee was potentially causing ourselves a problem when /if we change our minds and need them at more venues, HS wanted this minuting although the majority of the Committee were happy with only National. JM said that from his experience all ring orders should be posted to the Ring Secretary, he did not believe the Ring Secretary needed to be at shows, adding that “it’s a paper process, there has to be a paper trail”.

EM agreed that committee members should not take ring orders, money etc from members but should tell them to post it to the Secretary, asking “Who is responsible if there are 2 or 3 fingers in the pie?” JM said that buying rings from the RPRA was a two-stage process, whereas with the NPA members simply had to post the form and fees to the Ring Secretary and within days the rings arrived in the post commenting that “it couldn’t be easier”.

The Secretary was advised that the meeting at Reading had agreed that he would be required to act as ‘back up’ for the reporting of Lost birds.

There was heated discussion on comments that had been made at the meeting in Reading, GR said that in his opinion the comments that an individual had made were personal comments and were irrelevant to the discussion. EM said that discussion on the comments should not be included in the minutes of Reading as they were a side issue and not what the meeting had been called to discuss.

During discussion PL made amendments to the minutes which were agreed by the majority, he said he would circulate these when he got home; it was agreed that these would be inserted into the minutes.

Minutes of meeting held on the 15.1.16 Bradfield Reading.

National Committee member present: PL, RH, MR, HS, GG, CR, JS, GB

Mark had provided us with a list of bullet points for a discussion area the minutes below are built around those discussion points.

1. MR asked that discussions within this meeting stay confidential.

2. All at the meeting where in agreement that the role be split. Secretary / Treasurer and Ring Secretary.

3. All were also in agreement that we want John Harrison to stay on in his role.

4. Discussion took place into the reporting role of the Ring Secretary and Secretary / Treasurer. It was felt by majority that the two roles report to the committee however ultimately both roles require a focal point to go to which would be the Chairman.

5. General discussion took place in regards to the Ring Secretary’s attendance at meetings. We would expect the Ring Secretary to attend the Association’s AGM, however attendance at committee meetings would be optional if they desired to attend.

6. It was felt that the Ring Secretary should be in attendance at the National Show, however if they could they would be not turned away from other shows but it wouldn’t be mandatory that they attend others. Helen Seed/ Mark Rudd made the following point that providing rings is one of the most important services we provide to the membership and think that the Ring Secretary should attend more than just the National and it is vital that they are accessible.

7. Social Media: Ring Secretary should respond to social media enquiries.

8. Lost Birds: This would still have to be a dual role in relation to sourcing owners however in the first instance the first contact would be the Ring Secretary and then the Secretary.

9. The agreed Honorarium was £3,500

10. The cost of a new phone, P.O Box and franking machine would be optional as it may be up to the individual concerned in regards to whether they wanted a mobile phone, P.O Box. However, it was felt that the savings of having a franking machine outweighed the cost of investing.

11. It was also agreed that if Evan agreed then all C.V’s would be sent to him.

7/ Secretary/Treasurer’s Report

The Secretary had circulated information sheets on Membership, ring sales, and income & expenditure in the meeting bundle. Membership for the year to date was 335, including 7 Life Members and 11 Juniors. There were 10 Patrons, 42 New members, and 25 FPW subscribers. RH noted that this was considerably lower than the 404 at the same time last year, there was general concern at this trend. Ring Sales issued to date was 15,050, RH again expresses concern that this was 2,300 less that at this time last year. The income and expenditure sheet for the year to date was discussed. The Secretary/Treasurer reported that there was £31,340 in the bank. MR proposed a vote of confidence in the Secretary 'to put to bed recent comments on emails’ which was agreed.

There was discussion on the quality of the rings, there was concern that the rings were very rough to the touch and the numbers were a little feint giving concern that with time these may become illegible. The Secretary was asked to write to Horst Stengel expressing these concerns.

8/ Election of Officers

MR said that he wished to stand down from Obituaries. GB proposed JM for this role, he agreed and there was unanimous support.

HS proposed CR as Welfare Officer. CR said that he would do so subject to John Surridge’ s agreement. EM said that this was not necessary it was a committee appointment. CR accepted the nomination which was carried.

It was agreed that the Working Group remain as MR, GB & PL.

All other positions were returned unopposed. The Officers for the coming year are:

Obituaries – Jim Mullan

Welfare – Colin Ronald

Trophies – Richard Henderson

Publicity – Graham Bates

Standards – Mark Rudd & Helen Seed

European – Graham Giddings

Junior Members – Helen Seed

9a/ Ring Secretary

EM said that he had already received 1 application and another person had declared an interest. The meeting was advised that another application would be forthcoming. PL queried whether the post should be advertised in ‘Homing World’, after some discussion it was agreed that this would not be necessary. The closing date for applications was April 30th. The Secretary advised that the name, phone no and address of the successful applicant had to be available by early June so that Membership forms could be included with the June issue of FPW, the committee agreed that interviews would be held during May.

EM said that it was important that the Secretary was available to be in attendance. The interview panel would comprise EM as Chairman, CR as a former Secretary, and one other. PL and HS both said they would be willing to participate, the interview panel would consist of 3 of the 4 subject to availability. The interviews would be held at a venue convenient for the majority attending.

The Committee considered a draft membership/ring order form submitted by the Secretary. PL said that it was very similar to that used when there was a Ring Secretary in the past. It was agreed that the Secretary details should be in black rather than blue to avoid any confusion. It was agreed that this form be used. The Secretary said that as soon as the Ring Secretary details were known he would have 2000 printed and they would be sent out with the June, September and December issues of FPW, and would be available at shows, together with a revised Transfer form.

9b/ INFPA Rings

EM said he had been made aware a certain individual was urging fanciers to buy their rings from Eire and had supposedly been sending out INFPA membership forms. It was further reported another fancier was buying and selling on rings from abroad. EM said that he was raising the matter so that members were aware and the committee agreed this situation needs monitoring. The Secretary confirmed that NPA rings were only sold to one long standing member in Eire. The committee were disappointed when fanciers bought rings from other countries rather than supporting the NPA, but agreed that as the NPA sent some rings to overseas breeders they could not criticise EE organisations in other countries doing the same.

There was a lengthy discussion on bird carrying overseas rings. GB said that the only way was to monitor that birds wearing overseas rings were transferred into the NPA Ring Register. PL agreed and said that currently there was indication that ring sales were being abused, and there was a need to formalise a control mechanism. HS questioned the discussion taking place around limiting NPA Shows to NPA Members, she said they are open show and believed they should remain so to ensure survival. GB questioned the possibility of show entry forms ask for NPA Membership No and have a differential in entry fees for Members and Non-Members. CR questioned whether the NPA could subsidise some shows by refunding part entry fees of NPA Members. PL said that the BRC had a levy and questioned whether the NPA should introduce a levy. JM questioned whether ring numbers of exhibits should be on the entry form? There was general agreement that nothing should be introduced which restrict show entries or indeed NPA membership. HS said that we should not refer to foreign or overseas rings but should simply call them 'all other rings' including those issued by other clubs here in the UK, she felt this was important so that no individual was seen to be singled out.

9c/ Annual Club Returns.

The Secretary had circulated a list of affiliated clubs together with the date affiliation fees had been paid and Annual Returns received. 17 clubs had not paid affiliation fee or submitted the Annual Returns Form. The closing date for receipt of forms was 31st March. The Secretary was asked to write to the clubs requesting that the information be provided.

9d/ ‘Fancy Pigeon World’

GB reported that the June issue of FPW would be a joint effort between Claire and Denise, and thereafter Denise would be the editor. He said that new contact details would be included in FPW. EM proposed that flowers be sent to Claire to thank her for the work she had done in getting the magazine off the ground. The committee agreed. GB to organise.

GB said that the format of the magazine wouldn’t change, but that the lead in time could be reduced and hoped that the September and December issues would have a later copy deadline date.

HS asked whether Denise, who has no knowledge of pigeons, would be OK with the editorial content? Following discussion, it was agreed that if Denise had any concerns regarding copy she would raise them with GB in the first instance. EM and RH would continue proof reading.

GB said that a close eye needed to be kept on the FPW finances. He said if printing and postage cost increased it would impact on the profitability of the magazine. RH agreed and said that if there is an increase in costs the Committee needs to take early action. It was agreed that Membership fees be included on the agenda of the April meeting.

9e/ FPW Breeders Cards, Club Register & advert production

This lead to a heated discussion, however there was agreement that the income from adverts was “not stacking up”. HS said that she did not believe that the list circulated by the Secretary/Treasurer was correct. She pointed out that Roger Smith and Alan Dyka had been given cards FOC, the Secretary said that he had not been aware of this information. GB said that it was vital that the matter be resolved and was not repeated in future years. EM agreed and said that it was imperative that we have a system which works, adding ‘we cannot let it happen again’.

MR asked if there was a tick box on the membership form for payment of BC’s. The Secretary said that there wasn’t. MR asked if this was an option.

PL said that he liked the sample invoice for Club Register the Secretary had included in the bundle so that monies were sent to the Treasurer and the content forwarded to FPW. MR asked if this should be extended to include Breeders Cards. The Secretary said that it could.

GB stressed that the profitability of the magazine was dependent on the income from adverts. RH said that all adverts should be paid up-front and there should be no need for chasing money. PL said that invoices should be sent out and unless the money was received the advert should not be printed. There was general agreement that payment must be received before printing the advert.

GB said that there appeared to be 2 alternative ways of resolving the issue; either HS collect all monies for BC+CR and adverts and then send a single payment to the Secretary/Treasurer for inclusion in the accounts; or the Secretary sent out invoices and on receipt of payment and wording sent the text to Denise for formatting – though he noted that this would incur additional charges from Denise. HS said that she was not happy to take money for adverts following various comments that had been made, and said she objected to a comment the Secretary had made relating to the 2014 and 2015 accounts.

HS said that the BC+CR required considerable typing input and could not all be done at once, that they came in dribs and drabs eased the situation. She said that adverts took about ½ hour per advert, and the BC+CR were spaced out over a period of weeks in lunchtimes and free time. The Secretary asked if the cards were typed in Word before conversion to a pdf file, he was asked if he could do this work, he said that he could. HS said that the Secretary complained that he had too much work yet he was prepared to take this on. HS said that it took time emailing and phoning members and clubs for BC+CR and it took time chasing up the money. RH commented that if the money was received at the same time as the card/advert there would be no need to chase money.

PL repeated that sending out invoices for club affiliation fees was a success and that BC+CR should be invoiced in the same way and that money & text be returned to the Secretary. HS stated that the survival of the magazine and the profit we are seeing from it depends on adverts and we need to be cautious of the decision we make. The personal touch is required and without this people might not advertise and the priority should be the success of the magazine. HS said that the method of collecting the adverts and monies hadn’t caused a problem in the past and couldn’t understand why the Secretary couldn’t work with this.

RH suggested that the CR fee be incorporated into the affiliation fee and that a single charge of £20 be paid. The Secretary pointed out that not all clubs were included in the CR. With regard to adverts HS said that she was happy to continue with them and could send the Treasurer details of individual adverts for invoicing.

GB proposed that responsibility for the BC+CR be transferred to the Secretary Treasurer for annual invoicing and that the Secretary Treasurer would receive all text and type up for submission direct to the editor. He also proposed that individual adverts remain with HS who should inform the Secretary of the advert cost for invoicing so that all monies for BC+CR and adverts went directly to the Treasurer. This was seconded by JM and agreed. The Secretary was asked to send out invoices for all outstanding 2016 and 2017 payments.

RH proposed a vote of thanks to HS & MR for the work they had done with BC+CR over the past years.

9f/ EE & Breed Standards

Deferred to next meeting.

9g/ Expectations of Committee Members

MR said he made no apologies that this was “a general moan” and commented that we seem to ‘just muddle through’, he said that we expect ‘everyone else to do things’, and it’s ‘left to the few’. He said that everything is done ‘in a rush and panic’. He said that the attendance at committee meetings was poor, citing June meeting, and stressed the “need to plan more and stop firefighting”

GB agreed that we need to become better at planning, but sometimes things happen and it’s unavoidable that we have to deal with it as an emergency. MR said that we need “to nail things down early” rather than leaving things to the last minute. GB commented that the Committee was frightened of upsetting members, especially in view of the weak membership level.

JM said ‘nothing changes’, he said there was a mentality of “I’ll give you a tenner, what are you going to do with it?” and added that everyone seems to complain about everything, it was he said a fact of life today.

During discussion RH said that he didn’t think the majority of fanciers appreciated the risk that the Committee had taken setting up FPW, but he added ‘we can’t do things without the money’. RH continued that the committee had so much to do and thought that there was a need for an extra meeting, especially in view of the fact that the meeting following the AGM was only a half day.

CR said that he agreed with MR that there definitely was a need to plan better, he added ‘do we need to re-think the agenda?’. He said that we need to plan to mitigate a further decline in membership and asked GB at what level of membership the magazine become unviable. GB replied that FPW needed a minimum of 400 to continue. RH said that it was essential that a pricing review/costing was included on the next agenda.

10a/ Championship Show Dates

The Secretary had included a list of show dates and agricultural show dates in the bundle. The Committee was pleased to note that only 7 championship shows were still to provide a date. Some dates where corrected from list provided. Homer show has had a date and venue change, the Club would advise. Lancashire show date for 2018 is 18 Nov. The Secretary was asked to send these clubs a reminder so that the full show calendar could be approved at the next meeting.

10b/ Show Representative Forms

The Secretary reported that all Show Rep forms had been completed and returned and had included details in the bundle along with details of Show Returns. The Secretary noted that he had not completed checking the numbers of all Certificate winners.

The Secretary was asked to write to Southern Counties and Airdrie & Coatbridge to advise them that British Show Racers cannot be included in BiS awards.

The Secretary asked what he should do when a bird was shown in the name of an individual member of a partnership. PL said that birds must be shown in the owner’s name or partnership and could not be shown in name of individual members of a partnership. There was a general feeling that caution must be exercised as it could be a clerical error.

11/ Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

12/ Meeting dates & venues

Following discussion the Secretary agreed to re-circulate proposed dates with member availability so that dates could be agreed with maximum attendance. The venue for Committee meetings would remain at the Premier Inn at Rugby subject to availability.

13/ Any Other Business

GB raised a matter which he asked not be minuted.

There had been several complaints about the quality of the 2017 rings. CR said that needs raising with the manufacturer as the quality of the 2012 rings had been poor, and that colour/text would be used again in 2018. The Secretary was asked to raise the matter Horst Stengel.

HS MR and EM had received complaints that Champion Certificates from the 2015/16 had not been received by J Vaughan, D Bramley, I Sharples, A Emerson & K Reynolds. The Secretary said that he had taken them to Peterborough, Lancashire and York in the hope of handing them out, he had intended taking them to Reading. He said he would post out any outstanding during the coming week.

HS said that she felt unable to bring things to the table because there were implied accusations of lying or disbelief. GB said that no one should be afraid to raise matters at a meeting.

PL said that complaints should be raised, but that the complainants name should be given for credibility. HS responded that if she gave the name the Committee would pre-judge the matter and there would be no confidentiality. She continued that if a member asked her to raise something and wished their name not to be mentioned then she would do so and not betray their trust. EM said that he could see both sides of the issue and if names were mentioned they could be minuted. MR said that he and HS had been approached by a member regarding overseas rings and that he had been adamant that he didn’t want his name mentioning. PL said that the committee should be aware of the names of complainants and that the Secretary could be told not to minute names. The Secretary agreed that this was possible.

PL said that there was a need to become more professional as MR had already said. He continued that some Committee members take offence if they don’t get their own way; he suggested that members won’t always agree on every issue but said that they should accept it rather than lose temper. EM said that everyone knew what PL was referring to, he added that there was too much argument and it was time to put aside personal issues. He continued that decisions must be made for the right reasons and must be democratically agreed, he added that there were no ‘minority reports’. PL said “maybe we all need to stop and think before we speak” and added “let’s not lose respect”.

MR said that he had been to Blackpool Show of the Year and many people had asked him why there were no fancy pigeons, PL said that he had received similar comments. EM said the perception is that it’s “the NPA’s fault”.

MR said that he had been made aware of a dead pigeon in a pen at York. RH confirmed that a Fantail had died in its pen overnight and was removed early Sunday morning.

EM questioned the position of the Secretary and said that his interpretation of C+R A14 was that the Secretary was part of the Committee and should therefore be included in all committee emails.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 17:35