

ROYAL PIGEON RACING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 119th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association was held at the Coventry Hill Hotel, Coventry, on Friday, 27th February, 2015 at 9am. The meeting was opened by the outgoing Acting Chairman Mr L. Blacklock, who thanked everyone for attending. He then went on to welcome the Supporting Officers, Councillors, Reserve Delegates, General Manager, Editor of the BHW, ladies from the Reddings and members. Mr Blacklock then went on to welcome new Councillors, Mr K. Blount, Derbyshire & S. Yorkshire Region; Mr D. Holmes, East Midlands Region and Mr J. Waters, Western Region to Council. Apologies were received from Mr R. Jones, West Midlands Region with Mr P. Hammond deputising. Mr F. Bloor, South West Region stepped down as a Councillor due to membership numbers in his Region allowing only one councillor. Mr L. Blacklock wished to place on record his thanks to the three supporting officers Mr B. Tattersall, Mr R. Carlton and Mr P. Mitchell for all their help during a difficult past few months.

Before the commencement of the Annual General Meeting, Mr Les Blacklock presented the Confederation Trophy donated by the late Mr Len Lewis to Mr P. Mitchell, North-East Region for his services to the RPRA and the sport of pigeon racing.

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting were then passed as a true record.

The General Manager then proceeded to deliver his annual report for the year 2014.

GENERAL MANAGER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2014

In two sections this year.

Firstly - The personal GM report, my one opportunity to comment.

In summary a year best forgotten!

The Association made no progress in the year whilst it managed a myriad of internal disputes, legal challenges and what can only be described as personally driven vendettas, many of which are thankfully now nearing resolution.

The membership is owed an explanation, only now can I comment on the events of the past 12 months and this will be my only comment on the matters listed below -

Relationship with the Past President and Vice Presidents - There simply was no

relationship. The origins of this did not begin with my joining the RPRA but it is seemingly ingrained within the structure of the organisation. "Attacking the GM" has been a common theme endured by my predecessors with the same regions and/or councillors and/or members having a pre-disposition to attack whoever occupies the GM position. Looking back over old records it's a consistent theme to "attack" whoever is in authority, nit picking and attempted "fault finding" taken to a whole new level.

Being totally devoid of any positivity, constructive ideas or original thought we have a small minority who delight in mischief making whilst pointing out the minutest error or mistake. It can only be described as individuals almost wanting the RPRA to fail and to self-destruct.

I endured this negativity, in common with previous GM's, from very early on in my tenure. It is simply beyond belief what nonsense, rumour and innuendo is spread and most worryingly of all, believed, by adults who participate in the sport.

A factor that contributed significantly to this breakdown stems from the Maquis Medal claim by the Cope Family where Council was incorrectly and poorly advised by two councillors. Simply put - the two councillors did not conduct any research and relied on third party statements that were totally without any factual foundation. Some of the third party statements, Council will have seen them in previous

correspondence, can only be described as beyond laughable. This resulted in a flawed 'round robin' circulated to councillors based on no factual evidence in support of returning the Maquis medal to the Cope family.

The then President David Higgins ensured that a full and proper investigation was conducted. This showed that the RPRA had indeed acquired the medal properly with its purchase being openly approved and declared in repeated BHW and Council minutes, along with it being recorded as an investment on the balance sheet. Since its acquisition it has been lent out on display on various occasions and has been properly recorded and covered by RPRA insurance at all times since. As a result of this the two councillors advising the Cope family took personal issue against the General Manager and the then President Mr David Higgins.

The correctly researched and evidenced information was subsequently circulated to councillors enabling them to make a proper and reasoned assessment of the whole matter. Since then Council has supported the view, supported by legal advice, that the medal was acquired by legal means and remains the property of the RPRA until decided otherwise by Council. The medal, purchased for a sum of £4,000 in 1999 will have appreciated in value since and is recorded in the association accounts under investment.

The two councillor's activity included



*The new top table of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association.
Alistair Ewart, President Les Blacklock, David Bridges and Chris Gordon.*

passing details of the confidential disciplinary case against the GM to the Cope family. This was read out to me in letter form as part of another attempt to belittle and denigrate. Despite several attempts to obtain a copy of this letter from the ex-President, including a recorded delivery letter, requesting a copy, nothing has of yet been forthcoming.

In the spring of 2014 I was threatened with suspension when I initially refused to attend a meeting at the RPRA solicitors on the Maquis/Cope matter with the President. This I did on the basis that he was clearly an interested party having previously represented the interests of the Cope family. I attended under duress, however I informed our solicitors this was the case and my contribution was amended accordingly. The two councillors have advised the Cope family at various stages over the past two years, clearly acting against the will of Council and included an attempt to bias circulation to councillors prior to its distribution.

Can I just reiterate it is not my personal decision as to the future of the Maquis medal, it is Council's. My role as GM is to simply present Council with the evidence available so that they may make an informed decision.

The full documentation relating to the case has been circulated, considered and discussed by Council at every stage and this remains so to date.

Secondly – the past President and several of the VP's had decided to remove me from office. This intention has been well communicated and widely known.

Regretfully this plan included what can only be described as the coercion of an ex-member of staff and a current member of staff. This resulted in two letters of grievance being raised against me; one letter being written directly at the past president's request, immediately after the staff member involved had resigned.

Contrary to one of the ex-President's many statements he was informed, by email and telephone, of the reasons given by the ex-staff member for leaving. It subsequently transpired that many of the accusations were a mirror list of the accusations made against the previous GM (also proven to be unfounded).

A second letter came as a direct result of confidential information being relayed back to a staff member immediately after a

President and VP's meeting. This was done solely with the purpose of eliciting another grievance against the GM. There was clear evidence of collusion between many of the involved parties. The RPRA grievance procedure was not followed by any of the two complainants.

The eventual disciplinary investigation and hearing can only be described as farcical with the ex-President and several of the VP's obviously pursuing their own agenda despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Such was the difference to the note taking by one of the VP's and the actual statements made, confirmed by my independent witness, the subsequent meeting was recorded. It makes interesting listening and would become a text book case on how not to conduct a disciplinary hearing should it ever become public. Apparently the ex-President took legal advice on the matter, the outcome of which would depend on the accuracy of the information being given to the advisors at the time.

It transpires that I was even being disciplined for 'my behavior & reluctance to participate' and for sending an email to my staff the day after the initial visit. The email answered directly the numerous staff concerns as to what the whole matter was now about! I would defy anyone to not try and defend themselves properly, especially when faced with such a situation.

The objective to dismiss me, being obvious and common knowledge, was a point verbally relayed to a fancier by a VP before the initial disciplinary hearing had even taken place; another confirmation was made to a member of staff by another VP that 'they did not have enough to sack the GM only to discipline him' before the disciplinary hearing.

I relayed my disgust and displeasure to the ex-President, which in part led to a watering down of the intended sanction to a final written warning, basically a short stay of execution before the next vindictive nail in the coffin would inevitably be laid at my door.

My staff (including many ex-members of staff), with the exception of the one complainant, have supported me fully and each of them made statements to the effect that I had never acted in the manner claimed by the claimants. My staff was increasingly disturbed by the vindictive

nature of the 'investigation' carried out by the ex-President. The staff comment and feedback, about the President and VP's behavior and questioning, made simply appalling reading, and was included in my appeal documentation.

The whole matter led to my writing a formal letter of complaint to the RPRA Council, many of whom by that time knew what the 'not so hidden' agenda, behind the actions of the ex-President really was.

This letter of complaint, in conjunction with other issues relating to the actions of the ex-President and VP's led to their removal from office at the October Council meeting and their being replaced by four acting officers until this February's AGM.

Be under no illusion, if this had not been the case I would have resigned with immediate effect at the October meeting and the RPRA would have been facing a constructive dismissal case which it would have comprehensively lost.

The disciplinary case was finally resolved in December by an external independent specialist HR consultancy. The decision of the consultancy has been to reduce the sanction imposed upon me to a verbal warning with duration of three months, this expired immediately upon conclusion of the HR hearing. I was unhappy with even this minimal level of sanction however I accepted the advice of the consultant as the alternative course of action was not something I wished to pursue at that stage as the main protagonists had been removed. The RPRA had started on working to right the first of many wrongs.

I subsequently find that not only was my departure being planned and orchestrated but that a replacement GM had been sought and approached. Details of the 'part time' and 'working from home' arrangements, once I had been removed from office, had even been discussed. This goes some way to explaining an accusation made by the individual involved in a misguided and misinformed attempt to support and further his own ambition.

Thirdly – in the nine months of occupying office the ex-President and several of the VP's behavior towards me can only be described as harassment, victimisation and bullying – all of it totally unwarranted. At various times my terms and conditions of employment were

RESULTS OF VOTING AT 2015 AGM

<i>Proposition</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Proposition</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>	<i>Result</i>
7/1	6	19		LOST	7/13	7	18		LOST
7/2	12	13		LOST	7/14	21	4		CARRIED
7/3	8	17		LOST	7/15	5	20		LOST
7/4	9	16		LOST	7/16	NO SECONDER			
7/5	RULED OUT OF ORDER				7/17	14	11		CARRIED
7/6	RULED OUT OF ORDER				LATER DELETED BY COUNCIL AFTER RULES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – SAME AS 7/19				
7/7	15	10		CARRIED	7/18	WITHDRAWN			
7/8	14	11		CARRIED	7/19	25	0		CARRIED
7/9	NO SECONDER				7/20	8	17		LOST
7/10	6	19		LOST	7/21	4	21		LOST
7/11	15	10		CARRIED					
7/12	7	18		LOST					

amended without my agreement (a significant and fundamental breach of contract); instructions from Council were arbitrarily overturned, correspondence was entered into on RPRAs matters with no recourse to the General Manager and repeated interference in autonomous Regional business was made.

When the top table was voted in at the February 2014 AGM I was warned to expect trouble by a very experienced councillor, how right he was. I took the precaution of seeking other employment just in case the campaign against me gained significant momentum. In May 2014 I was offered a position running a local manufacturing company.

In consideration of this new position I sat with my wife and family to discuss it. In

summary we agreed I would stay at the RPRAs. Why should I leave a job where for three years it had been a good and positive experience with signs that change was beginning to take place. It was a job that I had thoroughly enjoyed. I knew that the vast majority of my staff wholeheartedly supported me and that a large number of councillors were also supportive.

With the support of my family, staff, ex-staff members, business colleagues and a large number of councillors I thought I was strong enough to withstand the onslaught that I knew would follow.

However the grievances raised against me and the continued actions of the President and VPs changed all that in the coming months. In every job I have ever

worked in I have been used to being supported by the peer group I work with and for – not in this case. It was plainly evident that the now ex-President and VP's wanted me out. Stress built up to such a level that it caused my health to suffer along with that of my wife and family. I was advised to take time off work, even then I managed the workload remotely from home as I strived not to give the ex-President and VP's another opportunity to criticise me.

Things continued deteriorating and came to a head after taking external legal and HR advice, all personally funded. This culminated in my formal letter of complaint, sent out in September, to Council regarding the activity of the President and VP's.

I would formally like to place on record my thanks to Messrs Blacklock, Carlton, Mitchell and Tattersall who stepped into the breach following the October meeting. This organisation owes those gentlemen a huge debt of thanks as since then they have been personally subjected to the wrath of ex-President and VP's through a totally unwarranted court case being brought against them just prior to Christmas.

The consequences of this legal action need careful explanation. Firstly Messrs Blacklock, Carlton, Mitchell and Tattersall did not seek office. As past presidents they were asked, by Council, to manage the RPRAs through to the February 2015 AGM. To reiterate they did not seek office but as experienced people they were undoubtedly the most fitting in order to manage the organisation over a short and difficult period of time.

The legal action was brought against the four named gentlemen as individuals not, against the Council of the RPRAs, as it should have been. If they had lost the payment of both the appellants and defendants legal costs, a sum exceeding £25,000, would have been payable. The way the court documentation was worded meant that Messrs Blacklock, Carlton, Mitchell and Tattersall could have been personally liable for these costs if they were unable to defend the case. As they did not seek office and were asked to fulfill the roles the RPRAs would surely have been morally obliged to honour these costs. Although I had indicated to our solicitor and barrister that the RPRAs would meet all costs, it would have been dependent upon Council's subsequent approval.

It is testament to their strength of character that they proceeded to defend the case, even knowing this.

The result of the court case along with the supporting documentation has been copied to all councillors.

Since the removal from office of the ex-President and VP's the vindictive campaign has still continued. Spurious allegations of financial misappropriation with absolutely NO supporting evidence have been made regarding an insurance claim, resulting from simple naïve ignorance of how a business insurance claim is professionally dealt with. This allegation has been proven to be totally

APPENDIX 'A'

RPRAs COUNCIL MEETINGS

27 February 2014	28 March 2014	23 October 2014
28 February 2014 (AGM)	29 March 2014 (Appeals)	24 October 2014
01 March 2014 (Appeals)		25 October 2014 (Appeals)

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Finance & General Purposes

28 February 2014
28 March 2014
24 October 2014
18 December 2014

President & Vice-Presidents

11 March 2014 (Reddings)
16 July 2014 (BHW)
04 August 2014 (Reddings)
11 August 2014 (Reddings)
01 September 2014 (Reddings)
23 October 2014 (Coventry)

Clock Ring & Weather Forecast/Liberation Site

28 February 2014
28 March 2014
24 October 2014

Show of the Year

19 March 2014
10 April 2014
23 July 2014
01 October 2014
19 December 2014

British Homing World

27 February 2014
28 March 2014
16 July 2014
23 October 2014

Future of Sport

27 February 2014
28 March 2014
03 June 2014
23 October 2014

Emergency & Rules

28 February 2014
28 March 2014
24 October 2014

PED Sub-Committee

27 February 2014
28 March 2014
23 October 2014

Reddings House

27 February 2014
28 March 2014
24 October 2014

Pigeon Racing UK & Ireland (Raptor Alliance)

13 February 2014
20 March 2014
07 April (Martin Horwood MP)
14 April 2014 (Neil Carmichael MP)
14 April 2014 (David Drew Ex MP)
13 August 2014
21 November 2014

Olympiad

27 February 2014
28 March 2014
23 October 2014

Standing Conference on Countryside Sports

10 May 2014
14 November 2014

RSPCA

13 May 2014

CAA

25 & 26 November 2014

without foundation and a full and thorough explanation has been provided to Council. To ensure a 'belt and braces' approach to such a malicious allegation we also invited the auditors back to examine all the journals, statements and reconciliations regarding the insurance claim. They concluded it had been handled totally correctly and professionally!

We have even received a request for a forensic and independent examination of the accounts, without any evidence in support of, or explanation behind such a request. To allege something untoward without ANY evidence places a slur on the previous Finance Manager(s), General Manager(s) and Auditors. An independent examination of our accounts is exactly what our auditors are paid to do! The independent auditors (Hazlewoods) have commented repeatedly and again recently on the superb accuracy and thoroughness of the RPRA and BHW accounts to the Finance Committee.

This unfounded and spurious nonsense is indication of how little these people care about the sport, they want people to fail. I would simply ask each of them the following question 'What positive suggestions, actions or leadership have you shown to move the association forward?'

The answer will be a resounding silence – as they have made NONE!

South West Region action attempted disciplinary against me.

I regret to say that I fully concur with the statement I heard recently that the activity of the South West Region can only be likened to that of a 'tin pot dictatorship'. The position of an RPRA councillor is clearly being used to further his own individual vendetta and on behalf of others. I regret to say the region can only be described as a 'rotten borough' as it allows this to continue.

My legal and HR advice is that I am employed by the Council of the RPRA and as such the South West Region have no authority to bring disciplinary action against me. This is also the view of the acting officers of the RPRA. I trust that this will be fully resolved by Council shortly and



Les Blacklock presenting the Confederation Trophy donated by the late Mr Len Lewis to Pat Mitchell, North-East Region for his services to the RPRA and the sport of pigeon racing.

that the vindictive actions taken against me will be fully examined and dealt with by Council.

To ensure this type of action is never repeated I have resigned from my local club, my son will now fly in partnership with my father.

All correspondence on this matter is available for Council's consideration in the February agenda.

In Summary

The past year has been a very negative one. The Association, the staff at the RPRA, many of its good councillors and the sport in general has had to endure this negativity.

Personally I have suffered, my family has suffered and only now am I really beginning to recover from the toll it has taken on me. My family however has washed their hands of the RPRA. Gone are the days when my children would look forward to helping out at the One Loft Race days or assisting with the school

talks. My father from being proud that I was General Manager of the RPRA is now embarrassed at having seen and heard the vindictive nature of the campaign against me; although he will not admit it he feels my pain as well.

Why carry on? What I do know however is that there are good people in this sport, people who do care and try and do the right things. Good people who simply try and enjoy the sport for the right reasons and not for personal gain or to follow a personal agenda. Well I know I am far from perfect, we all make mistakes and errors. I was told long ago that the person who doesn't make mistakes does nothing – how right they were. I'd like to think that in the first three years, even with my errors and mistakes, the sport did at least try to move forward.

Why carry on? I will willingly leave the RPRA when I feel I have accomplished all I can or that the Council of the RPRA wants me to leave. If I had walked away in the past 12 months the bullies, who are intent at destroying the sport, would have won and I'm not a quitter.

The formal GM report.

(A). Finances.

Simply put the Association finances are in the position where they were forecast to be some three years ago. The pattern of annual result is predictable. The historic pattern of having the BHW profit support the RPRA loss works for short periods of time before a fundamental change is required. We are now at that point of time again.

That the association has chosen not to increase its subscription for over five years means that only the increasing of cover price of the BHW to maintain a profit protects the association from a larger consolidated loss. Cost cutting at The Reddings and reduction in head count has

APPENDIX 'B'			
MEMBERSHIP 2014			
Date: 1st November 2013 to 31st October 2014			
<i>REGION</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>AFFILIATED</i>	<i>INDIVIDUAL</i>
	<i>MEMBERSHIP</i>	<i>MEMBERS</i>	<i>MEMBERS</i>
CUMBRIA	1,068	1,008	60
DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE	1,826	1,788	38
DEVON & CORNWALL	583	542	41
EAST MIDLAND	2,728	2,590	138
IRISH	2,357	2,246	111
LONDON	2,313	2,192	121
NORTH EAST	3,101	2,958	143
NORTH WEST	1,542	1,491	51
SOUTHERN	1,620	1,514	106
SOUTH WEST	1,464	1,411	53
WELSH	633	597	36
WESTERN	2,441	2,371	70
WEST MIDLAND	3,084	2,948	136
Totals	24,760	23,656	1,104

been completed to a stage where further reductions will impact on member services. The rate of increasing the BHW cover price is accelerating (NB it has risen over 30% in the past 3 years) as the BHW loses copy sales. Basically the BHW cover price has to go up by more each year to generate the same profit as the numbers of copies it sells reduces. The recent copy price increases have not been substantial enough hence the reduced BHW profit and the combined result of an increased loss in 2014. A large loss is again forecast for 2015, cash balances will have to currently fund this loss but the fundamentals need addressing.

The auditors have repeatedly advised a word of caution in that further opportunity to cut costs at the RPRA, to counter act the reducing income streams, are becoming limited. They have commented that the organisation does need to urgently start addressing medium and longer terms plans for the future. I have reiterated this in my presentations to both Council and the F&GP committee on many occasions.

Mrs. Lyna Zhang has completed over six months as the Finance Manager and has performed admirably. A note of thanks must go to Mrs. Suzie Mitten who came in to assist Lyna with her first year end as Finance Manager. Suzie gave up several days of her time unpaid, although we insisted on reimbursing her petrol costs and repairing her laptop.

Lyna's team's attention to detail was clearly noted by the auditors who complimented the RPRA on its extremely well managed financial affairs at the yearend audit.

(B). BHW

Its ongoing financial contribution remains crucial to the short and the medium term future of the Association. It is however becoming more apparent that we need to start identifying and begin planning the changes that will be necessary to ensure it maintains the positions it holds (both financially and in the sport) in the years ahead.

The BHW simply cannot continue to operate in the same way it has over recent years, it must change, develop and modernise. It now faces the same challenges that the RPRA has tackled over the past few years.

This is vitally important as continuing to maintain its profitability by simply increasing the copy price (over 30% in the past 3 years) is now rapidly becoming an unsustainable business model.

(C). DVSA (Formally VOSA)

We have been struggling to arrange a meeting with DVSA for many months to discuss the thorny issue of CPC policy. We have used our relationship with the Head of policy at the DVSA however the specialist assigned to dealing with our enquiry has proved difficult to tie down.

We persevered and have recently got a formal response. The response is a positive one for the RPRA and a notice will be published in the BHW and on line

APPENDIX 'C'				
SERVICES				
	2013	2014	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Variance</i>
			<i>+/-</i>	<i>%</i>
Membership Support Services				
Sales - Rings	941,410	926,369	-15,041	-1.6
Foreign Ring Registrations *	2,545	2,812	267	10.5
Transfers (Rings processed)	139,192	139,741	549	0.4
Sales - Clock Seals	322,500	309,000	-13,500	-4.2
Sales - Basket Seals	229,000	184,000	-45,000	-19.7
Sales - Sealing Pliers	0	1	1	-
Sales - Race Rubbers	975,000	1,004,000	29,000	3.0
Mail items received	36,472	32,364	-4,108	-11.3
Verifications	2,207	2,084	-123	-5.6
Changes of Address	348	287	-61	-17.5
Partnerships/Dissolutions	405	411	6	1.5
Ring Lists	1,940	2,010	70	3.6
Strays - Total	14,325	13,022	-1,303	-9.1
Strays - Phone/Letter	4,884	4,174	-710	-14.5
Strays- Web	9,441	8,848	-593	-6.3
Rule 112 letter- failure to collect stray	81	117	36	44.4
Sales - Pigeon Boxes	2,354	2,334	-20	-0.8
Sales - Polo Shirts	98	37	-61	-62.2
Sales - Ties	1	5	4	400.0
Sales - Baseball Caps	30	16	-14	-46.7
Sales - Stuffed toy pigeon-new for 2014	0	80	80	-
Racing Support Services				
Distance Requests	472,054	588,318	116,264	24.6
Loft Locations	984	982	-2	-0.2
Race Programmes - Continental	56	43	-13	-23.2
Permits ordered from FCF	225	189	-36	-16.0
Ferry Bookings	362	289	-73	-20.2
Race Programmes - Inland Racing	231	199	-32	-13.9
Liberation Site Bookings	3,885	3,609	-276	-7.1
Inland Liberation sites	120	120	0	0.0
Continental Liberation sites	44	44	0	0.0
* 2013 figure amended from 3850 to 2545				

shortly so as to update the fancy well before the season starts.

(D). Press and Publicity

Press activity must surely remain an absolute top priority for our organisation. With Council's approval and support we will endeavor to raise the profile of our sport.

Therefore my thanks to all the regional press contacts and fanciers who have helped out on so many occasions especially at incredibly short notice – without their ability to step up to the plate the publicity opportunity would be lost, something we cannot afford to happen.

(E). Mobile Display Unit

Saw much reduced activity in 2014. If you have a local event that would benefit from the MDU attendance please contact The Reddings and a request will be placed to the Future of Sport committee.

(F). Bletchley Park

The park is really something to behold and its exhibits are presented in a format

that has to be seen. It's genuinely different, engaging and extremely professional.

Special mention must go to our volunteer (unpaid) helper Mr Colin Hill, for his great work looking after the PIW exhibit.

No expenditure has been required, apart from simple leaflet replenishment or exhibit maintenance (display bulbs etc). The central display unit has become unsteady and will require some reworking (Free of charge) before it is repositioned; this will be done in the coming months.

(G). Historic legacy and archive

With the centenary of WW1 the interest in the role pigeons played in conflict has been incredible and already the number of events where we have been asked to provide either a display or talk was incredible. The highlight of which must have surely been the RPRA involvement with the BBC World War One exhibit that toured eight venues all over the UK.

My thanks go out to all those volunteers and staff who helped ensure that a huge number of people saw just what a contribution pigeons have played in conflict.

RPRA CLUB NUMBERS

	2013	2014
CUMBRIA	86	87
DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE	140	139
DEVON & CORNWALL	46	41
EAST MIDLAND	205	201
IRISH	106	106
LONDON	144	143
NORTH EAST	214	201
NORTH WEST	134	132
SOUTHERN	102	93
SOUTH WEST	91	85
WELSH	75	73
WESTERN	197	188
WEST MIDLAND	226	218
	1766	1707

The Dickin Medal display at the Blackpool Show in 2013 gained considerable interest both inside and outside the sport and we are still getting press activity some 12 months after the event. We have had a multitude of requests from organisations asking for either digital copy of the display boards or even to borrow them all, so many in fact that we had to get the boards triplicated so that they could be sent out to multi events at the same time. Several historical society talks were delivered in the year, on the basis of the publicity gained from the Dickin Medal display, and in 2015 several more are scheduled. As these tend to be evening talks I restrict the bookings to one per month as they are generally delivered in my own time, although the RPRA fund my fuel costs and any donation received is directed to helping fund the PIW exhibit at Bletchley.

Sometime in the future a searchable digital archive would be a superb testimonial record of the role pigeons played in war.

(H). One Loft Racing

Remains the single most successful, growing and positive area of our sport. It offers huge potential to promote the sport with "non-fancier" participation, school involvement and media focused entries (prizes for charity) – we have only scratched the surface of what's possible.

The loft entries have reached the reduced 1000 limit well before Xmas – the waiting list is now closed, although we are still getting applications. The loft had a great 2014 season resulting in a record number of yearling entries for 2015 season at nearly 300. The flexibility of dictating our own racing programme along with Jeremy and Julie's attention to detail make the one loft race the ongoing success it is.

(I). MNFC – Secret Messages / RPRA Schools talks.

The support given by the RPRA has certainly helped the MNFC roll out the secret messages programme, which once it is resourced appropriately, has the

potential to make a real start at addressing the general lack of knowledge about the sport within schools. It will continue to rely on volunteers to deliver the talks as well as providing pigeons. Please support the programme with a few hours of your time.

In addition to the "secret messages" work very many local school "pigeon talks" were completed during the same period and yes we did attract new young members as a result. We now get asked back each year to repeat the message to a whole new batch of budding enthusiasts at local schools, the calendar for 2015 looks to be busy.

(J). New technology

As previously commented upon we were starting to be involved at the beginning of exciting new opportunities rather than follow along behind.

We had been trialing and developing one specific technology during 2014 although this activity was rapidly curtailed by the ex-President and VP's along with numerous ludicrous and spurious claims (none of which were offered with any supporting evidence!) in an attempt to justify their decision.

Simply put a lack of understanding about how new technology is developed and how NDA's (Non-disclosure agreements) work accompanied by a "luddite" attitude to any potential new technology means that the RPRA has gone backwards. As I have informed Council NO new technology is ever going to be offered to the RPRA on the basis that it is approved by a Council of 26 people prior to its development.

The Council must accept reality and either empower its executive (The President and/or its VP's) to endorse and support an opportunity or accept the fact that it will never enjoy any exclusivity or leadership associated with a new product or technology. Leadership involves taking developmental steps and associated risks. Hopefully the RPRA will regain the leadership it deserves and sorely needs.

(K). The Reddings (site development)

During the year we had a dialog, via an architect, with the planning office including obtaining commentary on various planning proposals for redevelopment of The Reddings site.

In summary very little development will be permitted other than potentially adding a dwelling to one side of Reddings house and redeveloping the existing Reddings and Selby house sites.

Council subsequently requested that estimates are sought to knock down and rebuild Reddings House to make a modern office facility for the future. These cost estimates are approximately £450,000 to £500,000. This excludes the disruption cost of moving the staff "off-site" for a 12 month period whilst the works are completed.

Costs for appointing an architect and quantity surveyor to firm up on these estimates have been obtained and are with Council.

The whole front plot (excluding the paddock) have been valued at between £500,000 to £600,000 (up slightly from £500,000 when the valuation was last completed some 2 years ago).

Doing nothing is no longer an option such is the rapid rate of building deterioration.

Any expense other than "sticking plaster" repair is being delayed until the decision regarding the future of the whole site is made.

(L). The Reddings (Staff)

Staff numbers have been further reduced and now stand at 15.5 people (13.4 Full time equivalents). When I joined there were 22.

My thanks must go to the staff who through a very difficult 2014 continued to deliver a great service, invariably with a smile and friendly word to all who they have contact with.

The real depth of support from the RPRA staff (and ex staff) has been a really positive thing over the last 12 months, it's

GM ADDITIONAL - SCHOOL / PIGEONS IN WAR TALKS 2014

Inkberrow School, Worcs
ITV TV - Alan Titchmarsh Show - London
Blakedown Primary School, Worcs
Sunday Brunch TV programme - London
St Peters Primary School, Bartley Green
Poynton Rotary Club
Cheddar Grove Primary School, Bristol
Brindley Heath Junior School, Kinver
Monmouth Walkers - Caldicot
Woolwich Arsenal - BBC WW1 at Home
(2 days)
Madrasfield Primary School, Malvern,
Worcs
Malvern Primary School, Worcs
Overbury Primary School, Worcs
Rushcommon Primary School, Abingdon
St Marys School - Shaftesbury
Great Malvern Primary School, Worcs
Brushwood Junior School, Chesham,
Bucks
BBC TV, Bristol
Prior Park School - Cricklade
Prior Park College - Bath
Bradley Green Primary School
Highwood Primary School, Reading
Peopleton Historical Society
St Marys Washington - West Sussex
BBC TV Salford
Churchdown Primary School, Glos
Daventry Historical Society, Daventry
North Leach WI, Glos
Ashton Court, Bristol - BBC WW1
at Home (2 Days)
Stenton Primary School, Derbys
Evesham Probus Club, Worcs
Brewery Arts Centre, Cirencester
Chaderley Corbett Historical Society,
Cheshire, Arnold Centre - Nottingham
Historical Society, Kingsmead Junior
School, Bristol

been very difficult for them as well as me. Let's hope in 2015 we can all use our time, skills and expertise for positive goals and targets not negative ones.

(M). Council and committees

Council size will reduce slightly in 2015 as regional membership numbers drop.

(N). Raptors

On this one issue ALL the homing unions continue working together!

The draft bill may be laid before parliament following the May general election.

This will mean that during the election run up we will be slowly but surely increasingly our lobbying of the various governmental and nongovernmental groups to ensure our message and aims are understood clearly, timing is crucial to maximize the impact.

You can play a part. The Alliance have produced a simple briefing document so get off your backsides and please go and lobby your current and prospective candidates to ensure that they will support the law commission review of the Wildlife act.

No additional funding is forecast as being required by the Alliance for 2015 as the fund raising, donations and carried forward surplus should see the programme to the election and beyond. Once the election outcome has been decided a further update will be forthcoming.

(O). Show of the Year

With a great deal of effort and the usual hard work by the Show of the Year committee, stewards and countless others we delivered the 43rd Show of the Year.

With the loss of the Olympia hall this year was going to be a challenge and that it proved. Thankfully with the exception of a small, vocal, negative minority of stand holder's intent on pursuing their own agendas, the show was successfully delivered.

Feedback has been even more positive than previous years and we have learnt lessons this year that will be carried over to next year. The show however is not immune from the general decline in membership and this was reflected in a small reduction in overall attendance.

Special thanks to Nikon and Bucktons, who continue as our main show sponsors, to Park Hall lofts for the charity loft donation and to all the donors of auction pigeons, raffle gifts and prizes.

The gala evening held at the Tower ballroom was a disaster, not of our making, I might add. The debacle of no heating in an old building led to the sorry sight of people dancing in coats. Needless to say we have sought and gained compensation from the Tower and we have managed to fully reimburse almost all of the individuals who purchased Gala night tickets. Options for 2016 are being discussed!

(P). Olympiad – Hungary 2015

The UK was represented by a RPRA team ably led by Messrs Mitchell and Gordon.

Our thanks must go to all the fanciers who supported the UK entry that performed so ably. Thanks also to Peter Bennett (Photography); Lee Fribbins (Selection facilities at Doncaster); Colin Surtees (Conveying).

(Q). RPRA Website

Continues to develop and content expand, Facebook and twitter accounts are all growing nicely. A copy of the website report 2014 will be published in the BHW and on the RPRA website – it shows what can be done when we do things properly and that we are only really limited by our knowledge, ambition and funding at present.

(R). Sport maintenance issues” – or “things for you to do!”

No excuses these are the same as last year!

These can simply be summed up as -

1/. Vaccination – do it! There is more than enough vaccine available!

2/. Wing stamping/address marking – do it!

3/. Transfers – do them!

4/. Strays – report them and more importantly help repatriate Pigeons with owners.

5/. If you move house – make sure you can take your pigeons with you! Check your lease, deeds or tenancy agreement first!

(S). Avian Influenza

You will have seen in the press and media that the UK has now had two outbreaks of Avian influenza – in the past 6 months. Both cases appear to be attributable to wild bird transmission of the virus. Please be vigilant and be prepared to act upon DEFRA advice at the appropriate time.

Overview

I sincerely hope that the turmoil the organisation has been through will have ended and that under a new team the organisation can start to move forward.

We need to agree a plan for the future and then everyone support its delivery and progress. This will ensure we move forward in developing the organisation for the future and beginning to sort out some of the underlying fundamental issues that face us.

The change that is required will be difficult and require hard choices along with unpopular decisions. To do difficult things and implement change is always a challenge and will inevitably mean a few errors, omissions and mistakes along the way. We cannot continue to do as we have always done as we will get what we always got!

The negative small groups throughout

our sport that seem to delight in the spreading of rumour, “doom & gloom” along with stories based on no factual evidence must be addressed. I would therefore hope that Members, Clubs, Feds and Nationals along with RPRA Council grasp the nettle and support the plans that are put in place and assist change for the good of the sport!

The need for the RPRA, the other Unions and the sport to change must be beyond doubt to every one of its members and officials.

It doesn't need to be like this – the solutions are in front of us!

*Stewart Wardrop, General Manager
February 2015.*

The General Manager Mr Stewart Wardrop's report was accepted with a vote of thanks.

The next item on the agenda was the accounts for 2014. There were no questions or queries to the balance sheet so the accounts were passed by a majority decision of 19 votes for accepting the balance sheet with 2 votes against and 5 abstentions.

Next was item 4, election of officers.

The Acting Chairman Mr L. Blacklock then vacated the chair and declared all offices open. Nominations for President of the RPRA received for Mr L. Blacklock and Mr J. Hooper. Voting then took place by secret ballot with the result being 16 votes for Mr L. Blacklock and Mr J. Hooper receiving 9 votes therefore Mr L. Blacklock was elected the new President of the RPRA.

Nominations were then received for the three new Vice-Presidents and these were Mr J. Hooper, Mr A. Ewart, Mr C. Gordon and Mr D. Bridges. Again voting took place, by secret ballot, and the voting was Mr J. Hooper receiving 11 votes, Mr A. Ewart 19 votes, C. Gordon 19 votes and Mr D. Bridges 18 votes, so the three new Vice-Presidents elected were Mr A. Ewart, Mr C. Gordon and Mr D. Bridges.

The auditors, Hazlewoods and the solicitors Rickerbys were also re-elected for the coming year.

There then followed the election of officers onto the various sub-committees – Finance and General Purposes; Emergency and Rules; Clock, Ring and Weather Forecast & Liberation Sites; British Homing World Management and Lib-Line; Reddings House; Future of the Sport; Olympiad and Performance Enhancing Drugs. The election of delegates to the Federation Colombophile Internationale; Standing Conference on Countryside Sports; Confederation of Long Distance Pigeon Racing Unions of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Pigeon Racing UK & Ireland (Raptors) were then taken.

Voting then took place on the propositions on the Agenda for 2015.

At the AGM the President and Vice-Presidents as below were elected:

President	Mr L. Blacklock (1st Year) Cumbria Region
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Vice-Presidents

Mr A. Ewart
(1st Year)
East Midland Region

Mr C. Gordon
(1st Year)
North East Region

Mr D. Bridges
(1st Year)
Derbyshire & S.
Yorkshire Region

Following the AGM the various sub-committees of the RPRM met and then at 3.00pm full Council reconvened, with the new President, Mr L. Blacklock taking the chair and welcoming all present. Mr Blacklock then went on to thank Council for the honour and privilege of once again being the President again. Mr L. Blacklock then pointed out that he had been associated with the RPRM for the past 43 years after taking up the position of club secretary when he was just aged 17.

Apologies were received as per the AGM from Mr R. Jones, West Midlands Region with Mr P. Hammond deputising. After a short discussion it was proposed by the North East Region to accept the minutes of the last meeting. An amendment was received from the Southern Region not to accept them, as in their opinion they were not a true and accurate record. It was then put to the vote and the amendment not to accept them received 6 votes. The proposition then received 14 votes for with 5 abstentions. There were no matters arising.

REPORT ON COMMITTEE MEETINGS

REDDINGS HOUSE

The General Manager delivered the report for the above committee meetings held on 26th February. Matters arising: Selby House repairs have been completed. A small area of damp has

reappeared at the top of the patio door and the builder will be contacted to rectify. The General Manager advised that various remedial repairs are required at Reddings House, floor in racing support, vanity unit in WC and sink unit in kitchen. Reddings House Site Development. The General Manager presented three estimates for demolition and rebuilding of Reddings House as a modern office facility. Estimates were £491k, £400-500k and £430k. to this would be added an estimated £40k temporary accommodation and moving costs. The land value will depend on the type of planning approval eventually gained estimates ranged from £500-800k, with £500k being the current estimated value. It was unanimously agreed that we now proceed on the following basis – Test the market by offering the site for sale, via commercial estate agents. Access to the rear paddock must be retained, the rear paddock is not for sale.

OLYMPIAD

The General Manager delivered the report for the above committee held on 26th February. Olympiad Update Hungary 2015. The UK Team performed well picking up 2 Gold and 1 Silver Medal. One trophy needs re-engraving. Mr Gordon has all the certificates which need framing. The General Manager will organise and then we can distribute all the certificates, medallions and trophies to the Regions at the March Council meeting. The organisation and layout for judging was very good. Computer tablets were used for judging allowing fully automated results. This now leads the way and makes judging quicker and easier. The General Manager was asked to write to the FCI regarding the young bird section of the FCI Stand Class asking for clarification of (a) are there separate trophies for cocks and hens, (b) do all the points count toward the result, as the young birds were not counted in 2015. The General Manager was also asked to write to Mr Colin

Surtees thanking him for the conveying of the Olympiad birds; to the Hungarian Organisation and Mr Bardos expressing thanks for the manner in which the Olympiad was conducted and held; to the FCI asking them to re-examine the method of calculating Sporting Classes A and B to ensure fair competition from all competing countries; to the FCI requesting a judges training session to be held in Blackpool 2016. We would offer the services of the approved UK judges to assist with training to keep costs down. It was then decided that the General Manager place an advertisement in the BHW for the Olympiad 2016/17 in Brussels under the same entry and prize conditions as used for the 2015 competition. Finally, the committee expressed their thanks to Mr Chris Gordon for leading the team.

PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS

The General Manager delivered the report for the above committee held on 26th February. Matters arising, only one response to the General Manager's letter regarding PED contacts with the FCI has been received from Belgium. Testing 2015: The sum of £6,000 was approved for the testing budget in 2015. Free tests are to be allocated as follows:- organisations with less than 40 members, 2 free tests; organisations with more than 40 members, 4 free tests until the testing budget is exhausted. Appendix G, para 4, Only the appointed official/authorised person are to collect samples in the presence of an appointed official witness. At no time shall the owner/representative take part in the collection of faeces; The collection of samples will be carried out by persons authorised by the organization requiring the test or upon instruction of the RPRM Council or Region concerned.

Sample collection form. A revised and simplified form was approved for use. Costs are to be obtained for the March meeting of providing 'duplicate' type form for use. Para 10, Add the word laboratory the following – The appellant shall give notice in writing to the General Manager within 21 days of notification of a positive test result stating the grounds for appeal. Correspondence: Mr P. Quinn letter was noted but at this time no further action will be taken. Southern Region letter, the General Manager to refund Mr Gretton his £12.60 postal charges. Mr T. Riddle letter, the General Manager's response to the letter had been noted. Mr M. Lakin, BHW article was noted however they would advise Mr Lakin to address any concerns he may have through his Region. Confederation PED committee, invitation for RPRM to send a delegate to work on a Confederation PED policy (NB based upon RPRM one at present). Mr C. Gordon was appointed as the RPRM delegate with Mr A. Cowley as the reserve delegate. Atropine, the General Manager is to continue researching into the background information regarding Atropine with Dr De Kock at the South African Laboratory. It was recommended that the BHW re-run the advert advising



The fine collection of certificates, trophies and medallions won at the recent Hungary Olympiad.

fanciers that if you don't know what's in a product, don't use it. It was also recommended that the Rules Committee examine Rule 199 with regard to the penalties.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The General Manager delivered the report for the above committee held on 26th February. The Reddings House costings were endorsed. The lease agreement for Selby House would be looked at. Proposition 7/11 would be brought in from 2016. It was agreed that the transfer form currently being used be redesigned to accept six birds only, down from eighteen, on one transfer form, the cost of £2 per transfer form would remain the same. This to come into effect from Monday, 9th March 2015. The committee was asked to examine the automation of rings and stray enquiries and the trialling of editable downloadable forms and report back to the March meeting. They were also asked to see if any advertisers who currently advertise in the BHW would be prepared to advertise on the RPRAs website. North East Region letter re the facility to export club membership lists to word or excel which could then be emailed to a club secretary, thus saving postage costs. The General Manager was asked to get costs and report back to the March meeting. Western Region letter regarding forensic examination of the association accounts. The president reiterated his prior written request that the regions brought forward any evidence to substantiate any such request. The Western Region representative requested the matter be delayed to the March meeting. The reply from the General Manager to the South West Region letter regarding an insurance claim was endorsed. The Finance Manager's letter regarding uncashed cheques was then discussed and it was agreed that we adopt a policy of writing off any cheques under the value of £50, if they are not cashed after six months.

CLOCK, RING, WEATHER FORECAST AND LIBERATION SITE COMMITTEE

Mr Chris Gordon delivered the report for the above committee held on 27th February. Matters arising: It was agreed that a letter be sent to the FCI asking for the FCI logo to be made smaller and the font size increased for easier reading. List of FCI approved ETS systems and ETS updates was noted by the committee. It was also recommended that the General Manager sends another letter to Bricon in Belgium for a reply from the manufacturer rather than the UK agent, stating that we should not be able to input the life ring more than once and that we recommend the clock is amended to eliminate this problem. Bricon email re Time synchronization, it was recommended we write back to Bricon saying we have not been asked to approve the update of the software to enable the time

synchronisation to be received by an internet connection, and until such time this is not approved. It was also agreed that an advert is placed in the fancy press that the synchronisation of an ETS master timer is not approved to be set by an internet connection.

Implications of propositions passed at AGM. As it has been brought to the committee's attention that some ETS systems do not recognize all the letters on some foreign rings and that this committee recommends to Council that they are accepted for 2015 and that Council put a proposition for a rule change at next year's AGM to rectify the anomaly. Correspondence: Savic Ring Offer 2016 was noted by the committee and will be reviewed again at the March meeting. Bricon letter requesting for new ETS approval was noted by the committee and will be reviewed again at the March meeting. Irish Region email re Tauris ETS query. It was proposed that Mr C. Gordon investigate and report back to the March meeting. Liberation Site Committee. Council Appendix C proposal regarding organisations ensuring that their conveyors have a licence in accordance with Appendix C, the committee finds that to send a reminder of this with Rule 25 receipt is unworkable. It was agreed that if necessary a reminder is sent with the confirmation of the liberation site booking. Liberation Site Report: Basingstoke, site removed; Bishop Auckland, proposed new site awaiting report; Ford disused airfield, a proposed new site – it was agreed that we keep the current site at Littlehampton but keep the information on file for Ford Airfield; Newbury Showground, request for facilities has been made for 2015, awaiting reply; Poole, liberation site booklet details to be left unchanged; Wincanton, not suitable for large liberations; Nottingham Racecourse to be approved as an official RPRAs site with the travelling expenses being paid to Mr G. Cockshott for visiting the site. It was also agreed that a notice be put in the BHW that all organisations must ensure that gates and barriers are locked at all times on arrival and departure and that the site must be left in a clean and tidy condition. RPRAs site questionnaires to be downloaded for Continental sites and that all unused sites are kept as current sites. It was then agreed that Mr R. Carlton would chair the 2016 Convoys Meeting in Blackpool.

EMERGENCY & RULES COMMITTEE

Mr David Bridges delivered the report for the above committee held on 27th February. Mr Harris chaired the previous meeting and would take a vote of no confidence and no such proposition was put forward. Matters arising, ETS Update, the General Manager to confirm back to the Rules Committee this has been actioned. ETS links, the Clock Committee to deal with this matter. The Rules Committee requested confirmation from the General Manager that a reminder is sent out to all organisations together with the receipt that they must apply for a

conveyor's licence from their local Region secretary.

Implications of the propositions passed at the AGM.

Rule 51 go forward as printed in 7/7;

Rule 59 go forward as printed in 7/8;

Rule 129 go forward as printed in 7/11;

Rule 167 go forward as printed in 7/14 after Council clarified on whether credit/debit cards are available to organisations;

Rule 235 (7/19) to be deleted;

Rule 235 go forward as printed in 7/19.

Correspondence: Southern Region letter re Rule 65, to what extent are the accounts of the Association open to inspection by members? The Rules Committee to ask Council for clarification on Rule 65, and agreed that F&GP look at this and report back at the March meeting. Western Region letter re Mrs E. Venables, Secretary of the Edge Hill HS – Council concludes by 14 votes for, 7 against with 4 abstentions that Mrs Venables can be a secretary of a club but cannot be a member of a club whether flying or non-flying because she is out of the club radius therefore by implication cannot be the club's delegate for the Region. London Region letter re non-payment of RPRAs subscriptions. It was proposed that the Rules Committee to look at the rule on ring defaulters to see if they can come up with a proposition for next year and this is to go on the Rules agenda for the March 2015 meeting. East Midlands Region email requesting implementation of Rule 45 in full. Correspondence received out of time thus goes forward on the March 2015 agenda. East Midlands email requesting that propositions should be checked to see if they have been accepted from clubs in the correct manner. Correspondence received out of time thus goes forward on the March 2015 agenda.

BRITISH HOMING WORLD MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The General Manager delivered the report for the above committee meeting held on 26th February. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted and passed as a true and accurate record. Mr Blacklock advised that the Animals in War Memorial was still ongoing. A letter had been received from Mr and Mrs Mears thanking them for their invitation to the Blackpool Show. The Editor then gave his report. Circulation was down over the past 12 months, although postal subscriptions had increased over the same period. The 2015 Calendar, Wall Planner and Diary were discussed and it was decided that we again produce them as once again these had almost sold out. The BHW Stud Book was then discussed with the Editor stating that there were a few copies left of this year's book and that some of these would be utilised by the MDU this year. The Blackpool Show of Year Double Issue was again a resounding success, especially the 'online edition' with pagination up over the issues in 2014. The Editor reported that the online version of the BHW had been taken up by subscribers in the UK and Ireland, Hong

Kong, Gibraltar, Holland and Australia. It was then agreed that all organisations currently sponsored by the BHW for their race results that sponsorship would continue for the 2015 season. The Editor then informed the meeting that his staff wished to place on record their thanks to the BHW Committee and to Council for monies given for the staff Christmas lunch. The Editor then reported that the BHW had attended the Blackpool Show, NEHU Show and both Racing Pigeon Shows at Doncaster and Telford and it had been a successful show season.

A presentation had taken place at the BHW offices regarding a cheque from the Show of the Year Committee for £1,000 to the local Powys Carers Association of which a photograph had been published in the BHW recently.

The Editor then reported to the committee that he had received an email from Councillor Mr R. Shirley, South-West Region threatening to take him to the Press Complaints Commission, now called the Independent Press Standards Organisation by not publishing an article in the British Homing World that he had written. The Editor informed the committee that as the BHW is not signed up as a member of this organisation there is nothing that could be done. The Editor then informed the committee that the new lease car had been delivered, but it was some 6-7 weeks after the old lease car had been returned. The plan agreed at the October meeting was that the Editor hire a car for the interim period. Hire cost charges were investigated but it was going to cost at least £1,700 to hire one for this period and the Editor decided that it was too expensive to do, and as he could have use of a family member's car, he decided to use this instead, thus saving this extra expense.

The committee agreed that the list of proceeds from the 2015 Show of the Year donated to the various charities would be published in the BHW. It was also agreed that an increase in the BHW advertising costs would be looked at for the March meeting. Following on from the last BHW committee meeting, it was agreed to publish the Pigeon Pixels one-loft race articles in the BHW providing that the race was licensed under RPRAs Rules. RPRAs Online Auctions, the committee was asked to see if it was possible to facilitate online auctions on the RPRAs website. It was left to the General Manager, David Higgins and the Editor to discuss and report back at the March meeting. East Midlands Region letter re the printing of full ring numbers on any adverts published in the BHW. It was the committees decision that it is buyer beware and that it was up to the purchaser to investigate and research everything before buying.

FUTURE OF THE SPORT

The General Manager then delivered the report on the Future of the Sport meeting held on 26th February. Matters arising: It was recommended that Rule 19 needs to be amended. The quote of £500

from a University to produce a 3 minute DVD for use on the MDU, to be shown on a loop was accepted. The East Midland Region application for permission to have the MDU unit attend the Lincoln Show was approved. It was also approved that any offers of sponsorship would be first approved by the Future of the Sport Committee then approved by full Council and this would be for a financial benefit only as the RPRAs could not endorse any products. It was also agreed that the reprinting of leaflets for the MDU, mainly the Pigeons in War and the Getting Started leaflets go ahead.

The General Manager then gave short reports on the Confederation of Long Distance Racing Pigeons Unions meetings; Pigeon Racing UK and Eire (Raptor Alliance) meetings and the FCI meetings.

CORRESPONDENCE

Southern Region letter re the RPRAs October meeting, Council agreed by 15 votes for, 3 against with 6 abstentions that they did act correctly. North West Region letter re Mr R. Shirley would be discussed in Legal Matters. North East Region letter re dispensing with the March meetings and finding a better hotel to hold the other two meetings was defeated. In the same letter it was asked if Council constitute an Appeals Committee to made up of one Councillor per Region with five members of the committee being called to the hearings, so that appeal could be heard quicker. Councillors representing any Region involved in an appeal will be excluded from that appeals meeting. The Rules Committee was asked to go away and try and formulate a rule to cover this and to report back to Council. Letters were received from the Western Region and the South West Region regarding independent forensic examination of the RPRAs accounts. The President reiterated his prior written requests that the regions brought forward any evidence to substantiate any such request.

Mr M. Berry letter regarding pigeon ring number GB12V31892. Council agreed that the South West Region hear the case. Midlands National Flying Club Back to Nature/Secret Messages. It was agreed that the balance of £4,400 (which is the residue of the original £10,000 committed) be given to the MNFC. The Show of Year Committee will also donate £1,000 towards the venture. The General Manager gave a short website report to Council highlighting the excellent progress that had been made. A vote of thanks went to Mr Darren Brown of the RPRAs for all his hard work.

The General Manager then gave a short report on his RPRAs staffing review. Irish Region letter re deceased members within regional membership numbers, should they or not be included within a Region's declared membership. Council confirmed that only fee paying members are counted in official figures. Membership. Council confirmed the exact date upon which membership numbers are to be declared as 31st October each year.

The distribution of Continental Gifts was handed out to the Irish, Welsh, Derbyshire & South Yorkshire and West Midlands Regions.

Buckingham Palace Garden Party, it was confirmed that due to Mr P. Murray being unable to attend the party, the place would be offered to Mr R. Jones, West Midlands Region to attend.

APPEALS

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association held in the Coventry Hill Hotel, Coventry on Saturday, 28th February at 9am to hear appeals.

Present: Mr L. Blackcock (Chairman), Messrs Ewart, Gordon, Bridges, Blount, Cowley, Waters, Holmes, Briggs, Thompson, Carlton, Field, Gladwin, Headon, Higgins, Hooper, Hammond, King, Lawley, Mitchell, Murray, Wilkes and Akerman.

Present – S. Wardrop

Appeal A: Hearing under RPRAs Rule 199 (Appendix G). Mr J. Zerk v Welsh Region. The above appeal was considered by the Council of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association at their meeting held in the Coventry Hill Hotel, Coventry on Saturday 28 February 2015.

It was the unanimous decision of Council of those present that the appeal be DISALLOWED.

Council found in favour of WELSH REGION on the grounds that – The ETS was supplied by the Welsh Council for Voluntary action and the rules set in place by the club all say the ETS must be returned upon a club members resignation.

Appeal B: Hearing under RPRAs Rule 199 (Appendix G). Mr J. W. Linton v Cumbria Region.

The above appeal was considered by the Council of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association at their meeting held in the Coventry Hill Hotel, Coventry on Saturday 28 February 2015.

It was the majority decision of Council of those present that the appeal be DISALLOWED.

Council found in favour of CUMBRIA REGION on the grounds that – The loft situated on the farmland of Mr Linton falls outside of the club boundary as stated in the 2012 rules.

Appeal C. Hearing under RPRAs Rule 199 (Appendix G). Royal Exchange Flying Club v West Midland Region.

The above appeal was considered by the Council of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association at their meeting held in the Coventry Hill Hotel, Coventry on Saturday 28 February 2015.

It was the unanimous decision of Council of those present that the appeal be DISALLOWED.

Council found in favour of WEST MIDLAND REGION on the grounds that the ROYAL EXCHANGE FLYING CLUB failed to comply with RPRAs Rules.

It was the majority decision of Council that under Rule 83(8) the sanction imposed upon the club is reduced to one year, starting 25th October 2014.