Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management

Minutes of the fourteenth Annual General Meeting held at Sherbourne Park, Warwickshire on October 18th, 2017.

Present
Richard Greenwood, Chris House, Bob Baskerville, Jane Jackson, Liz Rhys Jones, David Walker, John Gilliver, Nick Franklin, Aoife Byrne, Jeanna Swan, David Renney, Jim Barrington, Tony Mudd, George Bowyer, Dominic Webber, John Brook and Lewis Thomas

Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Twink Allen, Susannah Reynolds, David Denny, Charlie McCartan, Peter Lane, Don Kelly, Brian Hildick-Smith, Liam Kearns, Ian Addison, Brian Fanshawe, Paul Kane, Bob Bainbridge, Peter Ferens, James Booth, Bill Cartnell, Mike O’Gorman, Ewan Macaulay, John Parker, Peter Bakonyi, Jane Wighton, Elspeth Milne, John Cooper, John Crossley, Richard Lloyd, Brian Abraham, Tam Leeming Andrew Carrington, Tony Welsh, Annie Bevins, Eric Hargreaves, Roland Minor, Douglas Wise, Edmund Shillabeer, Vanessa Hartley, Dominic Schneider, Tina Davey, Richard Dampney and Charmian Lewis-Jones.

Minutes of the thirteenth meeting
Minutes of the thirteenth Annual General Meeting held at Duns Castle, Berwickshire on October 18th, 2016 had been circulated in advance and were approved.

Matters arising
There were no matters arising

Chairman and Secretary’s report
The secretary’s report below comprised an updated version of the newsletter circulated to members in July 2017:

Deaths
Lawson Soulsby - member of Burns Inquiry 2000. Wrote valuable forward to *The Natural Chase*
Ian Addison valued authority on cognitive neuroscience

Subscriptions and membership
Membership stands at 120 but 100 former members have not renewed their annual subscription. Total is less than previously published but thanks to my daughter in law, Kate Thomas is now accurate. Some 70% of members have standing order mandates in place.

However the Association is in good financial shape (see treasurer’s report below) which has allowed amongst other things expenditure on exhibition space at the Game Fair last July.

Committee meetings
The committee met on two occasions since the last AGM, first in London at Tony Mudd’s club, the Naval and Military (In & Out) club on January 26 and here today at Sherbourne Park on October 18th.

Two issues have dominated discussions:
1. Repeal of the Hunting Act
2. Control/eradication of bovine TB

Both have been allowed to run largely out of control for decades, see below:
Hunting: LHT raised a Q in advance at 2004 AGM of CA: “Why does the CA not address the charge of cruelty in hunting and use the irrefutable arguments forward in our Vet Opinion”. Chairman (Jackson) tried to avoid/divert the discussion; Lord Mancroft said “now was not the time”. Jim Eberle at least obtained agreement that Council would discuss the issue – nothing effective followed. Avoidance of issue has persisted.

Bovine TB: The disease was practically eradicated in early ‘80s. But with badger culling abandoned in 1997 it has now escalated to present appalling level of some 35,000 reactors pa. Meanwhile DEFRA fiddles while England and Wales suffer.

Protracted and various efforts by LHT and others to influence both issues have regrettably been largely ineffective.

Negotiations with BVA
We (Chris, Aoife, Tony, LHT) met with the president of BVA and the two vice presidents at Mansfield Street in March. We discussed principally: repeal of Hunting Act, control of bovine TB. Leaflets distributed/sent.
We still have reservations about current BVA policy and thinking on:
- TB control
- Amendments to the Hunting Act.
- BVA animal welfare strategy published in Feb 2016 - encourages screwballs like Mark Jones (Born Free) and Alastair MacMillan (humane Society). Andrew Knight Soton Univ

Joe Sprinz is member of VAWM and SE rep on BVA Council – a valuable conduit.

Publicity
Letters to vet press: LHT to Vet Record, (June 24) response to McGill and others, that Hunting is the natural and humane way, Similar letter to Daily Telegraph rejected LHT to Vet Times, (August 14) response to McGill et al – that bTB spread by hounds nonsense. RESG letter to DT re Packham and bTB
Dr Helen Brooks in Hounds magazine (? June 2017) – delivered similar argument to our Vet Opinion independently

Poster at UFAW meeting June with JHB, “Wild animal welfare”, IEA senior author sadly absent

Attendance at the new Game Fair in July at Hatfield House was worthwhile. We had a good site and although the CLA have withdrawn from organization it was a good albeit smaller show. We (Jim Barrington and LHT) plus Tony Mudd, and Chris House were in attendance. The event returns to Ragley Hall next year 27-29 July. I hope we may attend.

A return to ARVS at Aintree, in November not planned – objective was to spread our message and raise VAWM’s profile – But impact of doubtful benefit. Consider return to LVS at new dockland site, seek speaking slot through BVA contacts

Contact with vet schools planned Jim B and Chris H repeat visit to RVC planned LHT to write to student secretaries – catch 'em young!

Reprints of Vet Opinion and Life in the Wild now available
Short hunting video made by Jim B and LHT now posted on web site,

The facts of rural life
Our book on wildlife management written by Charlie Pye-Smith and published by VAWM was launched in June 2015 at the Farmers Club. Sir Christopher Soames, Kate Hoey MP and author spoke in support
Book represents a mission statement for VAWM – the future of VAWM.
Wildlife management day planned at Westminster with support from politicians above and wildlife organisations e.g. G&WCT. Draft proposal by JHB

Scottish review of the Protection of Wild mammals Act
Prompted by Angus Holman-Baird of the Kincardine Hounds and assisted by James Legge of the CA, I drafted a submission to the Scottish inquiry which Dr. Jeanna Swan submitted to Lord Bonomy as our Scottish secretary. We were gratified that his lordship came to the sensible and obvious conclusion that a full pack of hounds was better than two hounds for flushing quarry and pursuing wounded animals.

Law Commission’s review of wildlife legislation
Finally published in November last year. Good and bad verdict from James Legge. Summary 54 pages long. Major shortcoming, it ignored for political reasons two important pieces of wildlife legislation: The Hunting Act and Badger Protection Acts.
Aoife attended briefing meeting in June -. DEFRA response delayed until after Brexit!

Our web site
Currently negotiating with Mark Thomas of Ennovation Solutions, to upgrade and redesign our web site. He will facilitate access for another person to edit content of the site
We now have a Face book page managed by Aoife and David does the occasional Tweet on our behalf
Need to facilitate access to members site - user name plus password.

The home page endeavours to provide short notices and links to recent statements and papers by VAWM. Comments on the web site are welcome.
The members’ site represents a valuable means of standing communication. Posted on the members’ site are:
- AGM notice and minutes
- VAWM constitution
- Newsletters since 2004
- Images of the last autumn meeting in Berwickshire taken by Liz Rhys-Jones

Countryside Alliance
The CA continues to lobby at Westminster for repeal of the Hunting Act largely on the basis of bad law. They remain, for a variety of unsatisfactory reasons, instinctively opposed to deploying our Veterinary Opinion on Hunting with Hounds.
Tim Bonner and Simon Hart, the architects of Liberty and Livelihood at the root of this strategy.

CA strategy document produced in January 2016, discussed by MFHA. Omitted reference to Donoughue Bill (replace and repeal strategy). Present position unknown. Perhaps after dinner speech tonight (18.10.17) by Tim Bonner will enlighten.

Suggested strategy for repeal of Hunting Act (LHT)
Should be three pronged:
1. Address cruelty charge – irrefutably the most humane, based on our Vet Opinion
2. An affront to democracy - support could be recruited from several independent peers e.g. Bragg, Phillips, Desai. An answer to wobbly Tory MPs.
3. Discredit anthropomorphism - key to promoting hunting see IEA/LHT letter Vet Times 16.5.16. Current public disinformation, a major problem and rising e.g. Sheep racing cancelled at Suffolk fete, statements by candidates for NT council. See also recent JHB blog: https://jamesbarrington.wordpress.com/

Bovine TB: the situation in Wales and England
DEFRA persists in pursuing the farmer led, inefficient strategy (now extended) of trapping and shooting. Roger Blowey and John Fishwick think it’s working (Brunton et al 2017).
Far more effective and efficient would be PCR testing to identify infected setts and gassing underground as proposed in our position statement of 2015 but DEFRA instinctively opposed to this strategy and to research into fumigants.

DEFRA’s mindset flushed out by LHT’s letter to the new SoS, Andrea Leadsom – “Beware the siren voices ………” Evoked letter from anonymous gnome at DEFRA revealing review by Prof Godfray is basis for current strategy based on cattle to cattle transmission. LHT responded with recent Vet Times letter commenting on naïve Woodroffe survey and suggested Prof G and other DEFRA experts learn the pathology of bovine TB, copied to SoS via her SPAD. Guy Robinson (sadly no longer in post).

Meanwhile the vaccination of badgers’ bandwagon rolls on in spite of having little or no prospect of success. The Welsh government, NT, RSPB, and several Wildlife Trusts are all deploying the Badger BCG vaccine without any evidence of benefit.

The ambivalent position of BCVA and BVA to vaccination is unhelpful, as is the uninformed position of the National Trust.

Q. Where do we go from here? How to shift the DEFRA mindset almost certainly driven by the permanent civil servants

Bob Baskerville, Chairman of the Kimblewick hunt, gave valuable update on the current situation following the diagnosis of bovine TB in their hounds in September 2016.

Seven of 200 hounds culled on testing culture +ve, 2 died.

Valuable assistance from Danielle Gunn-Moore of Edinburgh University with serology acknowledged. Paper in preparation

Hounds now back to normal activity

**Treasurer’s report**

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**Notes on expenditure:**

- Hon Sec’s honorarium 500
- AGM loss and hunt donation 165
- Game Fair expenses 1417
- Standing conf Country Sports 100
- Game Conservancy sub. 174
- Racecourse Vets seminar 1345.98
- Parliamentary TB meeting 624
- UFAW meeting 482
- Wildlife legislation seminar 354

Current book surplus 8312.18
Membership income 2155
Donation (R. Schuster) 450

Printing poster and booklet 287

Sales and sponsorship of our new book, the *Facts of rural life* have contributed in large measure to our healthy financial position. Thanks are due to Brian Fanshawe and Jim Barrington for this situation.

**Election of Committee**

The following members were proposed by Nick Franklin and David Walker to become members of the committee:

Lewis Thomas, Richard Greenwood, David Renney, Liz Rhys-Jones, Tony Mudd, Aoife Byrne, Jim Barrington and Chris House

The proposal was unanimously agreed by the meeting
Election of officers
The following members of the Committee were proposed by Liz Rhys Jones and seconded by Tony Mudd to become officers as shown:
Chris House – chairman
Lewis Thomas – secretary
Richard Greenwood – treasurer
The proposal was unanimously agreed by the meeting

Election of associate and honorary members
Richard Schuster, a banker and Jim Barrington, welfare consultant for the CA, were elected as associate members on the recommendation of the committee. Jim B. was hitherto an honorary member.

Date and venue of the next meeting
To be decided. Nick Franklin to ask the West Cornwall hunt

Any other business
Future of VAWM - 11 years on your secretary continues to worry!

We have recently (16.10.17) been approached by BBC 3 to participate in a documentary on fox hunting. Aoife will liaise with them.

Finally thanks to David Renney and David Walker for organizing our most enjoyable visit to Warwickshire. Thanks also to our admirable host Robin Smith-Ryland.

The meeting closed at 1815h

L.H.T.
November 2017