

Chairmans Report – Kay Lacey

Just like to say welcome and hello to any of you who don't know me and are wondering who I am! Unfortunately I was not able to be at the AGM last year when I was voted in due to having already committed to a trip to France to celebrate our wedding anniversary.

Well - we've survived a year under my helm and the Society is looking good. We have a **healthy bank balance** and our groups are continuing their valuable and much appreciated conservation work out in the field. We have also just been able to give a grant of some £1356 to the **John Simmonds Trust** at Rushall Farm for four specific projects to help children appreciate and understand the countryside – something we view as incredibly important.

Membership – our membership numbers last year were 276, which when families and husband/wife members were taken into consideration, this was estimated to be about 337. This year we were 268 members as at the 5th April. We've lost 2 Associate members and 6 ordinary members; mostly through 'natural wastage' I'm afraid. We are seeing a declining trend in numbers and I would like to ask our existing members if they could try and recruit just one new member. It could make all the difference to our numbers and just help to spread awareness of what we do and how important it is to look after and really treasure our beautiful local landscapes and wildlife. We are very lucky to live here. Let's spread the word and get a few more on board.

So –what have I been doing over the past year?

I have **attended** two AONB forums with Dick to represent the Society and also been to three meetings as a member of the local advisory group on something called the DRY project. DRY stands for Drought Risk and You and is a University led study into the effect of drought on various rivers and their catchments across the British Isles and peoples' perception and memories of previous drought events. The River Pang is one of the catchments being studied.

I am also the **Chair** of the Pang Valley Flood Forum and this continues to work constructively across the Pang Valley, with the aim of reducing flooding in its various forms. Sewer flooding in the Upper Pang Valley caused immeasurable difficulties in 2013/2014 and we are particularly concerned with trying to prevent this happening again, mainly for the residents but also as the surcharging effluent ultimately ends up in the Pang.

As a Society we also objected to a planning application for a solar farm at Mazelands Farm in Stanford Dingley. I am pleased to say that West Berkshire Council has recently turned the application down.

Apart from the work done by the two volunteer groups and the Barn Owl groups, there have been a number of walks and talks, and Dick will give you more detail on these in his report, as with his forthcoming book.

There have been a number of admin changes during the year. **Sally Wallington** has relinquished the role of Vice Chairman and has instead taken on the position of Countryside and Biodiversity Consultant, as this more reflects her professional role. **Tony McDonald**, our web master, has kindly taken on the Vice Chair's role. **Dick** has also said that he wishes to step back from the Walks and Talks role and has also been approved by the committee to take on the position of official Archivist. **Jill Liddell**, our Membership secretary has done a brilliant job for the last 5 years but recently said that she would like to pass the responsibility on to someone else. **Jathan Rayner**, who was originally involved with the Society many years ago when it first started as the Pang Valley Countryside Project, has offered (well was coerced!) to take on this job. Thank you to Jill for all your work over the past five years and particularly in streamlining what I understand was a somewhat clumsy system.

So – moving forwards, we have an eye on costs and have decided that we will offer Upstream as a pdf document to our local Parish councils, rather than sending out lots of paper copies. This will enable clerks to forward the document easily to all councillors and reduce our printing and possibly postal costs. There is another group of recipients who we are also offering the chance to have the magazine in an on line version although we will still be putting hard copies in local GP waiting rooms, libraries (while we still have them) and other such places and all our members will still get a hard copy.....unless you would like to save paper and postal costs and have your Upstream sent by pdf? If that is the case then please let us know.

Finally could I just say thank you to you for your support of the Society and also huge thanks to all my committee members, who put up with my attempts to Chair the committee meetings with great good humour, and my lack of experience with great tolerance! You have made it a really enjoyable year – thank you.