Minutes of Oriental Bird Club 34th Annual General Meeting held at St John the Evangelist Community Hall, Cambridge on Saturday 22nd September 2018

1. Apologies for absence
62 members were present. Apologies were received from Chris S Balchin, Colin Heap, Krys Kazmierczak, Tim Loseby, Brian and Margaret Sykes, Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne

2. Approval of minutes of 33rd Annual General Meeting
The minutes of 33rd AGM held on 23rd September 2017 were approved. Proposed by Chris Gooddie, seconded by John Eaton and approved unanimously.

3. Matters arising – there were no matters arising.

4. Treasurer’s presentation of 2017 Accounts
John Gregory, Treasurer, presented the 2017 accounts, copies of which were on seats and available on the Club’s website. The accounts showed a surplus of £4,513 (deficit of £3,413 in 2016). The Accumulated Fund used for the day to day running of the Club showed a deficit of £684 (surplus of £3,114 in 2016) with a year-end balance of £37,797. The Bertram Smythies Fund showed a deficit of £10,217 (deficit of £4,341 in 2016) retaining a balance at year-end of £112, 907. Meanwhile the Conservation Fund was in surplus by £9,997 (deficit of £2,734 in 2016) with a balance at year-end of £36,143. A major grant had been received from the March Conservation Fund (via Tides Foundation) and this amounted to £11,976 (£7,128 in 2016).

170 honorary members had been funded from contributions to the Honorary Membership Scheme from business supporters and supporting members. The Honorary Membership fund showed a deficit of £188, with a balance at year-end of £4,364. The Club’s underlying finances continue to operate at break-even.

Naturally there is a lot of uncertainty in exchange rates due to Brexit and whilst changes in exchange rates may mean OBC payments will go less far, this is not anticipated to cause the Club any significant issues. Trustees are responsible for ensuring the Club has sufficient funds to run for at least one year.

The Club’s net assets at 31st December 2017 totalled £199,708 (2016 – £195,195). In summary the Club’s finances continued to be healthy. Cash balances are invested in low risk short term deposits so funds can be accessed relatively quickly.

The Club is held in high esteem in the birdwatching community. It is a challenge to run on a voluntary basis and we are constantly looking for new volunteers. The Club requires new blood to provide extra help and new ideas. Anyone interested in helping out was asked to contact a Council member. The Club has for a few years run a Bursary Membership Scheme to encourage involvement from young up-and-coming individuals including some in the Oriental Region and on average we have been funding seven Bursary Memberships a year. It was discussed how some Clubs have gone down the route of digitising their publications, which may appeal to a younger audience, and ABC provides their journals free to all young birders in Africa.

5. Approval of 2017 Accounts
The 2017 accounts were approved. Proposed by John Eaton, seconded by Tony Sawbridge and approved unanimously. The Chairman thanked John Gregory, Margaret Sykes and Graeme Spinks for all their hard work with the finance side of running the Club.

6. Election of Independent Examiner
Frances Clark was re-elected as Independent Examiner. Proposed by Steve Rowland, seconded by Simon Roddis and approved unanimously.

7. Chairman’s review of 2017
Mike Edgecombe, in his fifth and final term as Chairman, presented his report. This year sees major changes to Council as Brian and Margaret Sykes step down. Having been the backbone of the Club for many years they whole-heartedly deserve a very well-earned thanks for the major contribution they have made in the Oriental
Region through their immense dedication to the Club. Over the last few years the general running of the Club and production of the publications has occupied many of their waking hours and it will be no mean feat to replace them. Council is committed to continue their legacy and take the Club forwards.

OBC publications have continued to receive highly positive feedback. OBC aims to include articles from dedicated people anywhere, particularly from nationals within the Region. The publications committee members deserve a big thank you for their huge job of collating articles, editing, proof-reading etc. and of course this is largely down to Brian Sykes, assisted by Nigel Collar, Margaret Sykes, Simon Roddis, Phil Tizzard and everyone else who has contributed, including Rene Pop and Tim Loseby with photos/illustrations, John Eaton for dealing with advertising and Peter Creed who helps to maintain the high standard of design and printing. Although Brian has resigned from Council he has kindly offered to play a lead role as Editor of BirdingASIA 30 and we hope we can draw on his experience and wisdom in years to come. We have much to be grateful to the Sykes for, but BirdingASIA is a major part of their legacy. Three superb publications were produced in the last twelve months, with Forktail delayed a while to allow for the immensely important article on Asian Bustards.

The new OrientalBirdImages (OBI) website is nearing completion, with over 150,000 images of 2,940 species from 1,800 contributors. Krys Kazmierczak is again to be thanked for the monumental task of administering OBI. He appeals for volunteers to come forward to help as moderators to review and upload submissions once the new site is operational. Photographs of only 24 Oriental bird species are absent from OBI, so if you have or know anyone who has any images of missing species, please do get in touch with Krys. OBC remains extremely grateful to Krys for maintaining the site and also to Richard Thomas who has helped to develop the new system being built by Rajneesh Suvarna. The Club is looking to improve its website and get more IT savvy and Council will be looking for more help to take the Club forward in this respect.

Facebook has attracted nearly 13,000 followers, OB over 2,000 despite being under-utilised and OBPix 1,100+ members. Simon Roddis has been much in evidence handling the OBC Twitter account which has also seen a steady increase in followers. Council wishes to develop more over the next few years in the social media arena.

Membership of the Club continues to remain fairly static at 1,858. As usual we had a good number of renewals and new members at the British Birdwatching Fair (BBWF) in Rutland. Margaret Sykes continued her sterling job as membership secretary silently and with diligence and our sincere thanks go to Margaret for doing such a superb job handling this important aspect of the Club’s management for many years. Council will continue to look at ways of keeping the Club contemporary in the vastly different climate to that which existed at its conception to continue playing a major role in Asian Ornithology.

The OBC stand at BBWF this year was busy and enjoyable. We again showcased some of the magical birds of the Oriental Region. Stand volunteers sold £1,488 worth of raffle tickets (exactly the same as the previous year), which when added to the total of raffle ticket monies received by post, the Annual Prize draw raffle will have raised around £2,465 towards the Conservation Fund. We are indebted to Swarovski Optik for donating the main prize of a pair of CL Companion 8 x 30 binoculars, John Gregory for donating a week’s winter break in a cottage in Stiffkey, to John Gray of Strix Editions for donating an original painting of a Short-eared Owl study by Ken Smith and Lynx Ediciones for providing some books for the remaining prizes. The Bagh draw was again a good incentive for people to purchase more than 5 tickets and thanks go to Raj and Arjun Singh for their continuing support. Ashley Banwell came second raising £500 for the Conservation Fund as the OBC contestant in the Birdbrain contest. A new event, “Best Ever Days – The World Series” engineered largely by OBC’s Chris Gooddie, was a great success, with OBC’s John Gregory coming joint first in the clap-o-meter stakes for his humorous personal account of a day in the High Himalaya. The chairs of the regional club’s meet informally at BBWF, which proves to be most helpful. The BBWF volunteers deserve a special mention, particularly Giles and Renee Braithwaite for helping throughout the whole weekend and also to Tempe Mansfield. The team did a wonderful job and avidly helped with the sale of raffle tickets.

As always, we are grateful to the sponsors highlighted in the Powerpoint Presentation on the big screen and featuring on the inside cover of BirdingASIA for their generous support and to other individual members who have contributed significant sums to the OBC Conservation Fund.

David Buckingham deserves a huge thanks for sifting through the 53 funding requests received. This year 13 awards were made since the last AGM, including nine small grants, one emergency award which supported urgent assessment of shorebird numbers and trapping threats at the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site in SW Cambodia and three larger grant awards of which two have supported a larger programme on the Indonesian bird trade being
conducted by Manchester Metropolitan University and local collaborators at Universitas Indonesia. The remaining large grant will fund a re-survey of Javan White-eye and help target future conservation action to sites with important relict populations. Grant funding amounted to £26,714. Thanks to those on the Conservation Committee and others in the Region who have helped with the huge task of vetting applications and with grant administration.

A personal highlight for the Chairman was meeting Patricia Zurita, the CEO of BirdLife, and signing with her a new Memorandum of Understanding between OBC and BirdLife. This will help strengthen the network in the Region to prioritise funding and support for Flyways, Important Bird Areas and Key Biodiversity Areas. John Gregory will be meeting the Asian BirdLife Team in Singapore in November. Mike thanked all Council members for their support over an immensely rewarding, though at times challenging year. Anyone with passion and enthusiasm who would like to help please do get in touch.

OBC relies entirely on volunteers and thanks go to the working representatives of OBC in the Region. They all, together with our UK team, help to make the Club run smoothly. It is our intention to work harder to get connected more in the Region.

8. Approval of amendments to Clause 6 of the Constitution
The Chairman explained minor changes were necessary to the Constitution as follows:
The second sentence shall be amended by adding after ‘Other members of Council shall be appointed to specific roles’, the words ‘including Vice Chairman’. In addition, there shall be added to the end of the penultimate sentence ‘unless otherwise recommended by Council and approved in the Annual General Meeting’. These changes were proposed by Vicki Harley, seconded by David Walsh and approved unanimously. This allows executive officers to stand for more than five years if recommended to do so by Council and if it receives approval at the AGM.

9. Election of 2018 Council
The following Council members are standing down: Brian Sykes, Margaret Sykes and Andy Mears.

It was proposed the following members stand for re-election: Dave Buckingham, Mike Edgecombe, Chris Gooddie, John Gregory, Tim Loseby, Simon Roddis, Tony Sawbridge, Jo Thomas and Richard Thomas. This was proposed by Tempe Mansfield, seconded by Jim Scott and approved unanimously.

The Chairman was delighted the following have agreed to stand for election: Lisa Whiffin as Membership Secretary and William Rodger. Their election on to Council was proposed by Vicki Harley, seconded by John Eaton and approved unanimously.

The following members of Council have agreed to stand for election as Executive Officers:
John Gregory – Chairman proposed by Steve Rowland and seconded by John Geeson
Chris Gooddie – Vice Chairman proposed by Pete Morris and seconded by Matthew Rodgers
Mike Edgecombe – Acting Treasurer proposed by Dave Buckingham and seconded by Vicki Harley
Jo Thomas – Secretary proposed by Steve Rowland and seconded by Tempe Mansfield
All were approved unanimously.

10. Any Other Business
On behalf of the Club, John Gregory thanked Mike Edgecombe for all his efforts during his time as Chairman and his steering of the Club towards future success.

There was no further business and the Chairman declared the 34th OBC AGM closed.

Jo Thomas, Secretary