

THE BIRMAN CAT CLUB

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 22nd May 2016 at the Oliver Bird Hall, Solihull

1. Chairman's welcome

Mrs Madden welcomed the members and reported on the achievements of the club and members in the GCCF awards.

The Birman CC and members were nominated in 6 categories and were outright winners in 3 categories and 2nd in the 3 other categories. We were outright winners in Show Managers (Mrs Culf and her Team), and Welfare and Rescue (Mrs Walker and her team), and the most popular steward was Vivienne Lee. We came 2nd in the most favourite club with the winners being the Northern Birman Club. The 2nd for everyone's Favourite judge was Elaine Culf and we came second in the Most Popular Show. Flowers were presented to Mrs Culf and Mrs Walker. The trustees were also mentioned in their support to Mrs Walker. Mrs Brown's 90th birthday was also mentioned for June and that the club would be sending her a gift.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been listed.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on the 17th May 2015

There were no corrections.

4. Matters Arising

Mrs Hill wished to make a correction to Item 5, lines 13/14 – Mr Hill said that this was not said, but it had been said that Winn would reduce their funding appropriately and proportionally if other funds were given. Mrs Madden felt that it had not been made clear at the meeting as the minutes were her understanding of what was said. It was acknowledged that perhaps the situation had not been understood correctly at the time. Mrs Hill reported that Winn did not in fact deduct any funding.

Mrs Hill proposed acceptance of the minutes, seconded by Mr Baxter with the majority in favour.

5. Treasurer's report

i) Approval of Accounts (circulated)

Mr Warrender was unfortunately not able to be present. **Mrs Walker proposed acceptance of the accounts, seconded by Mrs Knight.** The majority were in favour.

ii) Appointment of Examiner

The same examiner was proposed and this was accepted.

iii) Review of Gifts

There was no change as gifts were not given.

iv) Review of Annual Subscriptions

There was no recommendation to raise the subscriptions.

6. Secretary's Report

Mr Porter reported that much of the involvement this year has been correspondence with the GCCF Office regarding a complaint which was referred to them and also the work being done in the progress of Silver Birmans where we supported the member and others who were interested in this. We also needed to support the Welfare and Rescue regarding them not being a bona-fide club in respect of the GCCF awards but this had been resolved before our letter got to them. Otherwise it was a quiet year.

7. Membership Secretary's Report

The report for last year had been circulated. It was reported that as usual there was a dip in the first quarter of the year but this changes when members don't receive their magazine and they realise they forgot to renew or they have changed address. The numbers are less than they were in the heady days but we are still a large club. He did ask that when selling kittens members put their name on the application form or encourage members to put their name as a proposer when joining via the website. We have about 20 overseas members.

8. Rule Changes

Mrs Madden informed members that the changes below were to allow the club to run more smoothly.

Addition to rule 5.

To ensure the smooth running of the club, the committee shall have the power to confer and vote by electronic means on urgent matters. Any decisions made this way to be ratified at the next committee meeting. **The meeting approved this change.**

Change to rule 7.

The agenda for the meeting, together with the minutes of the meeting, together with the minutes of the AGM and a statement of the accounts for the preceding year ending 31st December shall be sent to each household not later than 21 days before the date of the meeting. **The meeting approved this change.**

9. Confirmation of Officers and Committee.

Vice Presidents: Mrs Val Kilby is nominated by the committee for 3 years. **The meeting approved this change.**

Chairman: Mrs Anne Madden is nominated by the committee for 1 year. **The meeting approved this change.**

Treasurer : Mr. Jim Warrender is nominated by the Committee for 3 years. **The meeting approved this change.**

Ordinary Committee Members.

Co opted members. Mrs Horton is proposed as Vice Chairman for 2 years, Mrs Osborn and Mrs Culf are proposed for 3 years. **The meeting confirmed the appointments**

Mrs Ensor and Mrs Owen have completed their term of office are willing to re stand and are proposed by the committee. **The meeting confirmed the appointments.**

10. Election of GCCF. Delegates:

Mrs Val Kilby, Mr. Neil Porter and Mr Jim Warrender. **The meeting confirmed the appointments.**

11. Election of BAC. Representatives:

Mrs Simone Ensor, Mrs Elaine Culf, and Mr Jim Warrender. Reserve: Mrs Patsy Knight. **The meeting confirmed the appointments.**

12. Show 2015 and Show 2016

Mrs Culf had circulated a report on the show and made a plea for exhibitors to support the show. A big vote of thanks was proposed to Mrs Culf.

Mrs Madden reported that Mrs Veal will be fronting the dinner this year. She also reported that we have a party of Germans coming along to visit the show and they would like to attend the dinner.

13. Heart Fund

Lois Wilkie had come along to talk to the meeting and thanked everyone for their support went on to explain the Winn funding. Winn match funding from donors up to a maximum of \$25,000 which has not been claimed on either of the years the research has been running. The confusion we have had in the past

has been that donations made direct could result in Winn reducing the amount they put in. In the first year, the research was funded from the Winn Feline foundation with funds predominantly being raised by the Birman Heart Foundation. There were donations from the clubs and independent donations which have been used for different reasons, so the money that came from Winn has been used to scan 69 Birmans and the majority were normal with 8 having HCM and 1 with RCM. The most common age of the screened cats was 2 years old and they would like to see older cats. Pedigree trees have been mapped for every cat to determine the origin of an inheritance pattern of heart disease and to try to decide whether these forms of cardiomyopathy are one disease or whether they are different diseases with different genetic causes. It is important to know if we are looking for one genetic test or more. The money coming from independent and club donors has been put towards measuring cardiac biomarkers which are hormones released by the heart when under stress or strain or if the muscles have been damaged as they wanted to know if that would be a good screening test for heart disease in Birmans, instead of having to travel to a referral centre for scanning when you could go to your own vet for a blood test. Unfortunately it has proved not to be a useful test on its own but it has been found there are differences in the levels of the hormones between normal cats and those with heart diseases and if they are elevated it would be those cats you would particularly want to be scanned but they don't work as a pure stand alone screening test.

The research project has been granted a donation from Winn with the Heart Foundation and others, for phase 2 of the studies, so we will move forward with genetic testing. We have banked DNA from every Birman that has been screened and from 9 Birmans post mortem and taken DNA from older cats. Lois explained that they are using targeted gene sequencing where they have chosen the 8 mutations that commonly cause cardiomyopathy in humans because the diseases are very similar, and have therefore cut down the cost of this test, with the amount of data generated and time taken to run the test and analyze the data. They are planning to test both normal Birmans and those that identified as affected. They do however need a very good normal population which would be 8 years or older that have been screened, so more are needed in this category which is why Birmans being screened by the RVC will remain free of charge. They are very interested in seeing affected cats. They realise travel could be a concern for affected cats, and are offering off site scanning if enough cats can be got together in a group perhaps at vet practices. She then opened up for questions.

It was asked if financial reports were prepared for outside agencies or clubs. The answer was that a report had been provided for the meeting which was left by the signing in sheets but is not something that is normally done.

Mr Baxter asked regarding screening and breeders getting together and asked how it would work and if it could be done at non vet venues. Lois advised that they now have insurance to screen off site. They would take about 30 minutes per cat so would be happy to scan all day excluding travel time.

Mrs Semos asked what it involves to the cat. Lois advised that they are weighed and microchip checked and listen to the heart and if they are older than 8 years old their blood pressure is taken, then for scanning the cats can be laid on their side with the owner helping. With regard to clipping, they would prefer to do so to make images clearer, but they don't always need to do .

Lois reported that screening would remain free for any Birman and at the RVC they will see cats regardless of age though those most helpful to the testing will be prioritised so the older cats and affected cats will go first on a waiting list. Offsite screening, if very popular, priority will be given to the older and affected cats.

It was asked if there is an upper age limit and Lois confirmed there is no upper age limit as they would like to see the older cats if possible. The older cats who have had kittens are the most beneficial to the project rather than the younger cats still breeding.

Mr Tarr asked if the result could be given on the day. Lois says that they can give a verbal report on the day but then will analyze off line much more precisely and will then send a written report with a diagnosis and recommendations but if the cat has risk factors they will liaise with the owner's vet regarding management and medication and follow ups.

Mrs Hill asked if a cat has had to be euthanised at the vet, the vet can take the heart and a blood sample but what are the requirements to get the samples to the RVC in a usable state. Lois said the vets either send the whole cat for a complete post mortem, and realised that this may not be so feasible, so suggests that the vet takes the heart and fixes it in formalin. For DNA the vet can take a sample immediately prior to euthanasia. If this is not possible, the vet can send a piece of liver or spleen which needs to be frozen and the DNA can be extracted as long as it has not been in contact with formalin. The precise details can be provided to anyone if needed.

Mr Baxter proposed that we start looking at the viability of having drop in clinics for screening.

Lois did say that microchipping is not essential for off site screening unless you want to publish the results on a database.

Lois explained the whole genome sequencing which means comparing the whole genome of normal cats versus affected cats which is a huge amount of data taking much longer to analyze the samples but the resulting data generated is also massive so to then sift through that data to detect mutations could take years to find so if the previously outlined approach doesn't result in any suitable results then it would mean going through the whole genome approach which would result in a third phase of funding for that research.

Mr Baxter asked how significant is this in the Birman population from current research. Lois says that 1:7 of non pedigree cats are affected but in Birmans it is expected to be higher and she thinks that non pedigree cats will go on to live a normal life span but in Birmans it may be different as some have had a bad incidence of it and go on to die.

Mrs Madden thanked Lois very much for coming along and presented her with a gift in appreciation.

The meeting broke for refreshments.

On reconvening, Mrs Madden thanked the volunteers who helped with catering.

14. GCCF Delegates' report (circulated)

The report had been circulated and Mrs Culf asked for reactions to some proposals in the forthcoming GCCF meeting.

- a) A proposal that the Grand class would have Birmans and Ragdolls combined. There are a lot of changes proposed to all sections and they are to be voted on as a whole. The changes have been driven by lower numbers being shown and it was felt that if the Ragdolls join the Birmans it will be harder to gain Grand Certificates. Mrs Culf did say it would need a 50% majority and it would be implemented from 1st January 2017. The meeting voted with a majority against it.
- b) The number of classes that can be entered to 6 classes. Mrs Culf did say that the committee had preferred it to be 4 but felt the lower number was good for the cats. The meeting voted with a majority for it. If the proposal is defeated at Council we could then suggest that it should be no more than 4 classes.
- c) To allow the choice of certificate classes for titled cats which means you can stay in your original open class even though you are entitled to enter the Grand. The meeting voted with a majority against it.
- d) To introduce new protocols to clarify the BOV and BIS procedures and to allow the award of an appropriate additional certificate for the BIS. There was no voting for this item.
- e) Give greater clarify to the outcome of the Olympian classes, which means they would need to place the cats down to 5. Mrs Culf felt it would be more useful if every cat was reported on and it would be possible for the club to put this proposal to Council for the September meeting. There was no voting for this item.

15. BAC Report (circulated)

Mrs Madden reported that there had been discussions on the Silver gene but that there had been a 50/50 vote. It was reported that Mrs Gainsbury and Mrs Anderson-Drew were approved as pupil judges. Mrs Dutton and Mrs Perkins were approved as full judges. Mr Porter was reported as approved as a pupil judge and had done his first judging.

16. Merchandise report

Mrs Horton reported that at the last committee meeting the stall had not been out for 3 years and we had no offers to take it over so she had proposed that we sell off the stock rather than leave it sitting around, to recoup some money, which was agreed. Mrs Horton has therefore taken over £900 with very little stock left. She thanked Carol and Ralph Turner for going off with her with their car to bring the merchandise back to the Midlands and she is now down to just 2 boxes with 2 other boxes with stationery and small items which will be going up to Jane Sparkes who will deal with postal orders for these. From now on there will be no more merchandising. Mrs Madden thanked Mrs Horton for doing this.

17. Election of Cup Secretaries and Reports:

AGM. Miss Janet Osborn.

Show. Miss Janet Osborn.

Show Support. Mrs Morwenna Semos. Mrs Semos had one of the rosettes with her and explained that the higher the awards the larger and more elaborate they get. Fewer people are claiming these and asked that members spread the word that they are available, personalised and in club colours

18. Magazine and Calendar draw for 2017.

Mrs Russell reported that the Summer edition is shortly to go to the printers after the AGM report is added, and hopes it will be with members in June/July. After this edition there will be only one per year but probably a bumper one possibly in Spring time to also cover the show, in much the same format and in colour. We have a new printer who already does the Northern Birman magazine. She will look forward to any input on the new magazine.

The calendar draw took place.

January – Ron Mlynek and Dennis Hayward

February – Elizabeth Scott

March – Simone Ensor

April – Heather Horton

May – Elaine Culf

June – Birman Welfare and Rescue

July – Ann Mott

August – Jeni Nutley

September – Dawn Brown

October – Morwenna Semos

November – Kathy Hope

December – Janet Osborn

19. Welfare.

Mrs Walker presented her report and thanked everyone who has supported the rescue. They have had a very testing year on the rehoming front. The Rescue covers 3 of the 4 breed clubs and actively work alongside the Cats Protection and RSPCA and other smaller rescues to try to help with any Birmans that come into their care, trying to get them out and rehome them ourselves where possible. There had been an appeal for sites for new safe houses which had a good response. We have 4 new ones, one to be sited in Cheshire, one for Blackpool, Somerset and Lincoln. We are very pleased with the quality. There was an update on Elliot who has gone to his permanent foster home. His liver shunt operation was not a total

success so he will be on antibiotics and a special diet for the rest of his life and any vet bills incurred will be covered by the Rescue. As a matter of interest she reported that over 8 years the Rescue has rehomed 620 Birman and 2 non Birman friends. Rosettes had been designed to give as special thanks to some who have gone above the call of duty and one has been presented to Dorothy and Jimmy Nelson who played a large part in Elliot's life and she also presented one to Heather Horton who has been a big support as well as doing a bungee jump that raised over £1000 for Rescue and over the past year has driven hundreds of miles transporting rescues and doing home visits and trips to vets. Another one was presented to a team member who has had a safe house but due to personal circumstances has had to give up rescue and helps on the side lines. She has still continued though and it was presented to Tig Heffernan. Mrs Walker thanked everyone for voting for the Rescue award and is proud to be the first Rescue to win the award and now the first to win it twice

20. Trophy Presentation.

After the trophies were presented a vote of thanks was given to Miss Osborn for all the work that has gone into the presentation.

21. AOB.

Mr Baxter asked about the BAC decision regarding Silver and asked if we could include the other colours that could come along with Silver, ie Fawn and Cinnamon. Mrs Madden asked for it to be put in writing to the committee for us to consider and didn't see any problem with putting it forward to the BAC. Mrs Madden mentioned that there would be a talk at the show with Audrey Saye talking on breeding and we are hoping to get a speaker to discuss the Silver Gene as it is poorly understood. Mrs Knight said that she was pleased to see the Birman Club and members being so successful in the GCCF awards.

Mr Semos said that some people winning trophies were concerned about the subject of insurance whilst holding the trophy and asked if the committee could consider the club carrying its own insurance for the trophies to take the onus from the winners. Mrs Madden did respond that the committee looked into this about 20 years ago and any insurance company wanted photographs of the trophies with the values but due to the amount of trophies we presented, it wasn't done. It was felt we could discuss the matter again. Mr Semos felt that carrying its own insurance could mean that the club would undertake to replace a trophy which Mrs Madden felt we already do when they become damaged but we will discuss it further. Mrs Semos wanted to thank the people who had provided and served the refreshments, for their hard work.

22. Date of the next AGM.

The date of the next AGM will be 21st May at Oliver Bird Hall.

23. Closing by the Chairman.

Mrs Madden reported that the raffle had been drawn and thanked everyone for attending.