

SEVERNSIDE RAMBLERS GROUP

Minutes of 17th Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 16th November 2014 at The Jubilee Hall, Alveston

The meeting was preceded by an illustrated talk on the County Air Ambulance Trust given by Mark Wilkins.

Present Jenny Aspinall, Jenny Ball, Sue Driver (Publicity), Gloria Drury, Chris Everett (Secretary), Joy Harrison (Walks Co-ordinator), Pauline Hart, Gill King (Social Secretary), Paul Lees, John Lewis, Ann Light, Liz MacDonald, Ken Mill (Web Master), Janet Milne, Zoltan Nagy, Mike Norman, Andy Pearson, Joyce Powell, Peter Randall (Treasurer), Heather Rickards (Chairman), Irene Skeates, Jean Williams.

Copies of the Agenda, Minutes of 2013 AGM, and Accounts were circulated to those present.

1. **Introduction** Chairman Heather Rickards welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Jean Aellen, Sue Bowerman, Helen Briggs, Don Ford, Chris Gaymer, Carolyn and Robert Muston, David Shepherd and Kathy Strawbridge.
3. **Minutes of previous meeting held on 17 November 2013** were accepted as a true and accurate record. Janet Milne proposed and Ken Mill seconded that the minutes be accepted.
4. **Matters arising from the Minutes of the 2013 AGM**
 - 6.13 (i) **Coach trip:** Thanks to Ellie Townsend and Tony Kite for arranging a very successful and fully subscribed coach trip to Exmouth on 22 June.
 - 4.13 7.12 (iv) / 6.13 (ii) **Map reading course:** This was added to the programme and run on October 4. Thanks to Janet Milne.
 - 4.13 7.12 (vi) **Group holiday abroad:** Ongoing discussions by committee.
 - 6.13 (iii) **Bowling at Hollywood Bowl:** Gill to investigate the possibility of a bowling session in 2015.
 - 6.13 (iv) **Geo-caching:** Thanks to Helen Windsor who led an interesting walk on 8 March locating 5 geo-caches in the Frenchay area.
 - 10.13 **Appointment of Independent Examiner:** Ian Weston is happy to continue auditing our accounts.

5. **Officers' Reports**

(i) **Chairman**

Welcome to all.

Severnside continues as a thriving, friendly group. New faces have appeared this year, and new faces are always welcome. It's what makes us a vibrant and diverse bunch of people.

We all enjoy the walks, but during the past year we have had three enjoyable and successful weekends away: to Dartmoor, Brecon and to Exmoor. Thank you to Chris Everett and Gill King for arranging these. Thanks also, Gill, for arranging skittles and quiz evenings. Thanks to Helen Windsor for introducing us to geo-caching. And to Ellie and Tony for arranging a splendid coach trip ramble near Exmouth.

Our principal activities are our walks. We are all grateful to those of you who lead walks. It can be fun to organise a walk, it can be satisfying to take others to a place that you have found and want

others to enjoy: but it is time consuming, it is a commitment and it is a responsibility. Thanks to all of you who continue to find splendid walking routes.

Sometimes, neglected paths need clearing before you can bring a group through them. And this is where we come to the Ann Light plan! Ann (our committee member) suggested that we make good use of the money received whenever a group member books a Ramblers Holiday. (they are independent of Ramblers Association). By mentioning the group name when booking, the group receives a payment of £5, £10 or £20 per person.

She suggested we use the income to buy path clearing equipment. We decided to buy secateurs and to give them to walk leaders who lead the most walks. Peter has made careful calculations based over the last 3 years (and more particularly the last 2 years) and today 7 people can receive a pair of secateurs. These are for them to keep. In the near future, further pairs can be awarded. Secateurs go to: Jean Aellen, Janet and Mike, Joy, Ken, Andy and Chris, Jenny and John and Ann.

Planned developments within the organisation:

You may be familiar with a South Gloucestershire initiative called Walking for Health. It is for new walkers, or those recovering from injury or illness. It is a successful venture, and many of their walkers are ready for more challenging walks. So now they have brought out a programme of longer walks called Stepping Forward. They would be very pleased to have Rambler members volunteering to lead these walks or to be back markers. I have a contact number if you are interested. Walkers in the Stepping Forward scheme will be sent information about local Ramblers Groups and will be offered a 30% discount off their first year of Ramblers Membership.

We will be sent a "toolkit" advising us "how to run a 3-5 mile walk" !

The other development has come from the Ramblers Head office.

The Board of Trustees are to put forward new proposals to improve the way Ramblers is governed for the next 10 years.

A working party has produced some ideas, (which they emphasise are only "thoughts") and they are asking for feedback from Groups and/or individuals before the end of December.

The working party will then use the feedback to present ideas to the Board of Trustees who will decide what should go to the General Council in 2015.

Very simply, the proposals which could affect us are:

1. Local Groups will be less constrained by rules. Instead of a constitution there will be a shorter, easier Group Agreement. This may make it easier for us to decide how to spend our money.
2. Groups can specialise. They can cater for a certain age group or activity. *(to quote; they can undertake all or some of Ramblers activities according to mission. i.e. they can just do activities they want to do)*
3. More information will be available about other Groups and members can swap to another Group that matches their interest, or they can join more than one. Membership need not be geographical.
4. Less bureaucracy. Technology has reduced the need for administration. People can meet up and walk with little structure. This is more attractive to younger members. (there is competition from online Meet-up groups). The reduction in bureaucracy will change the role of the Areas. We may need only to meet once a year and instead of each group having to compose an annual report to Area, they will just complete an online form.

The details of these proposals are on the Ramblers website. Please have a look at them and respond on the online feedback form. If you prefer, you can share your views with a member of our committee, preferably in writing.

I wish to record my gratitude to the members of the committee. Everything I said about them last year I can say again this year. Word for word!

You have been efficient, supportive, enthusiastic. Thank you.

Mike, and Janet (embracing retirement) are heading up North. We will miss you both. Thank you Mike for your work on the committee. Thank you Janet for organising the map reading sessions. And thanks to both of you for the popular but challenging walks you devised. All the best with your house hunting.

Ann is also leaving the committee. Her links with The Avon Area committee and with the excellent Wessex Wanderer Walks has made her a valuable member and we will miss her wise and sometimes challenging suggestions. Thanks Ann.

I am pleased that most members of the committee are happy to stand for another year. This does not prevent us from hoping that new members will join us. Please consider it. You would be on the committee of a very positive and successful group!

Heather Rickards, Chairman

(ii) Secretary / Membership Secretary

Membership numbers have picked up a little since last year, currently standing at 152 (up from 148). We have welcomed new faces largely through the Friday Ambles and the evening walks, which perhaps give opportunities for new walkers to test their stamina in a less challenging environment. We are pleased to be able to offer such a range of activities, and many say what a friendly, welcoming group we are. A Sunday turnout will generally be in the region of 12-16 walkers, which I think is a nice number as it gives everyone the opportunity to talk to everyone else.

We were terribly sorry to lose Peter Robinson earlier this year. Peter had only walked a few times with the group since joining last year but his cheerful nature was appreciated by all who met him.

Perhaps the dry, fine weather over the summer helped, but we haven't had any significant injuries over the last year. A bashed shin on a broken stile (which was reported) was the worst we had – that's not to say it wasn't painful for Jean! Overall, we've had a successful year and continue to be a thriving, friendly club.

Chris Everett, Group Secretary

(iii) Treasurer

This year for simplicity I have provided a breakdown of both accounts to clearly show the income and expenditure on each, which I hope you will find simpler to read and more informative.

Group Account - £917.97 (includes £4.55 petty cash) as at 30th September 2014

- Although expenses have increased over the previous year these were more than adequately covered by income from various sources giving rise to a generous increase in funds of £233.58.
- Contributions from Group reduced slightly during the year and in line with budget proposals will reduce further in 2014/15 as Severnside slowly moves ever closer to being self-funded.
- We have allocated funds for the "Forgotten Landscape" project subject to agreement by members (see item 6)

Social Fund Account - £498.47 (includes £19.50 petty cash) as at 30th September 2014

There has been considerably more activity on this account by virtue of the increased number of social activities and holidays undertaken throughout the year.

This account is meant to be self-funding or non-profit making however we have made a surplus in excess of £200 during the year, which needs to be addressed. My solution, for approval, would be to transfer £250.00 -£300.00 to the Group account to meet expenses and add to our contribution to the "Forgotten Landscape" project.

Role of Treasurer

I have enjoyed my continuing role of Treasurer throughout the year and as such I am willing to offer myself for re-election for the coming year.

Peter Randall, Treasurer

(iv) Footpaths Officer

Footpath problems reported to South Glos.in 2013

8th December 2013

Monmouthshire County Council / Cyngor Sir Fynwy

Sevenside Member slipped on the stile when loose post moved at Grid Reference ST447863. No update available

10 February 2014

Diversion of public footpath OAN 64 at Meadow Cottage, Shellards Lane, Alveston for a total distance of 73m

2 March

Diversion of a length of ORN 48/28, ORN 46/10, ORN 58/10 and ORN59/20 at Tesco Distribution Centre, Western Distribution Park, Severn Beach

3 April

Stopping off public footpath legally recorded as running through numbers 8, 18, 19 and 37 Chiltern Park, Thornbury which was never applied in 1974. Alternative path exists

10 September

Obstruction on path OHL/13/10 which runs from Yew Tree Farm in Hill to the road between Hill and Nupdown. Poor signage, very overgrown vegetation on stiles. Reported to Outdoors West website by Mrs Rickards who chose to receive email updates to her report

Current Status: This issue is awaiting processing

DAVID WATERSTONE

PAST AVON AREA CHAIRMAN

David Waterstone passed away at the end of September. He collapsed whilst on the way to an appointment at the Hospital. David was Avon Area chairman for a while, also the Bath Ramblers Footpath Officer and a Cotswold Warden. He was a member of the Waterstones Bookshop Family

Allan Davies, Footpath Officer

(v) Publicity Officer

Magazines

We have received support throughout the year from the local areas' publishing our walks programme in their magazines.

The Bristol Observer which covers most of Bristol has also advertised many of our walks.

Local Radio

I have been told that our walks are publicised on the airwaves by Bradley Stoke Radio, and a few people have said that some of the walks sound really interesting.

Chris and Andy have done an interview with Bradley Stoke Radio and talked about Severnside Ramblers.

I have recently contacted Ramblers head office; they have plenty of people in head office available if we get the option of further interviews and we have no local volunteers. Ramblers would be interested in talking about the path maintenance and the Festival of Winter Walks.

Volunteers Workshop with Ramblers

In June this year I went on a publicity day run by Ramblers. The event took place in Taunton. I thought the workshop on publicity was well run, gave excellent tips on writing up walks, and an overview of how professionals use advertising to sell products.

A lot of time was given to using Twitter. I can see the benefits and how it can reach a large audience in seconds.

Publicity for next year.

Continue with the advertising with the present magazines and local paper.

Contact Bradley Stoke Radio to see if they would be interested in an interview with Ramblers.

Possibly look at using Twitter.

Sue Driver, Publicity Officer

(vi) Walks Programme Coordinator

What a lucky group we are. When you look at the programme we have a great variety of walk locations, distances and terrains to enjoy. We have our walks during the day, together with a host of social activities, day trips and weekends away. A big thank you is owed to all those who make it possible whether by way of organisation, leading, helping or attending – we cannot do it without you! Due to the better weather, we have had more people on our evening walks – but please, can others help with these as Chris and Andy have done them all for a couple of years now. Further, it is clear that although asked for before, Saturday walks have been ill attended and therefore will not be run for the time being. It is not fair on those who put them together. Remember you can attend walks by other ramblers groups or by using the Railway walks programme to widen your horizons and enjoyment of walking. On the whole we manage to fill our programmes – if anybody would like to lead a walk but not sure what to do then there is help. Walks can be anywhere, for any distance – and you can reserve a date before actually testing out the route and filling in the other details. We do need other people to lead some walks, so others do not feel the need to do so many – share it out.

Sometimes the leader will not want to do the walk due to very bad weather and that is their decision – but they will still need to be present at the meeting point. Walkers – please check if you feel that a walk might not take place in these circumstances to save a wasted trip.

Joy Harrison, Walks Co-ordinator

(vii) **Social Secretary**

The new social year for Severnside Ramblers started in December 2013 with a new venue for our annual Christmas Walk and Lunch. 27 of us enjoyed a 4 1/2 mile walk around the Tortworth Estate before finishing up at the Farmers Table for an excellent Christmas Lunch. It was so enjoyable that we are paying a 2nd visit to the Farmers Table in December 2014. This is now fully booked with 30 of us meeting in December for a walk followed by a Christmas lunch.

In April a group went to the HF hotel on Dartmoor for a very wet and windy weekend of walking and then again in September a group travelled to an HF hotel in Brecon for a very enjoyable short break with wonderful walks in the Brecon Beacons.

Then in October a group of 23 travelled to Simonsbath for a weekend of walking on Exmoor. We stayed at the Simonsbath hotel and in lovely weather experienced the beauty of Exmoor by walking around Dulverton, Simonsbath and on the way home, the Quantocks. It was a very comfortable stay at Simonsbath with very warm and cosy log fires and very good food. On the Saturday evening the entertainment was provided by Carolyn and Robert in the form of a very good Pub Quiz.

On Saturday 8th November a fund raising skittles evening was held at the King William in Hallen. This was attended by 22 members who all enjoyed an evening of skittles and a ploughmans style buffet. Prizes were awarded to Doreen Luffman and David Jefferies for highest lady and gent, Roz Robinson won the killer at the end of the evening. All monies raised have been donated to the Avon Air Ambulance and we are honoured to have a member here with us today.

Plans are already in place for various social events in 2015 so please watch this space.

Gill King, Social Secretary

(viii) **Web Editor**

Website

The website is maintained on a regular basis with regular updates of walks, photographs and walking information.

Many thanks to our members who have provided photos of our walks over the last year. The photos showcase the range of walks and the areas we visit and the photos are the most popular pages viewed on the website.

Social Media

I have continued to maintain a Facebook page for Severnside Ramblers. I use this for advertising our walks and showcasing the areas we have visited by adding photos with links to our website.

Our website remains the primary source of information relevant to our group.

Ramblers Website

We now have our own page on the Ramblers main website see <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/group-finder/areas/avon/groups/severnside.aspx>

Our page provides an overview of the Group with a link to our own website.

The main aim of the Group pages is to provide a facility for Groups without a website to be able to advertise their activities.

Feedback

I am always interested in feedback and any news items to add to the site. The reporting of any broken links would be very helpful.

Ken Mill, Web Editor

6. Forgotten Landscape Project

South Gloucestershire Council has been awarded Stage 1 funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership programme. Whilst South Gloucestershire Council are presenting the bid it is in fact made on behalf of a partnership of statutory and non-statutory bodies including Bristol City Council, RSPB, Natural England, FWAG, BRERC and Avon Wildlife Trust, English Heritage and the Environment Agency and stake holder groups including businesses, parish councils, schools and walking groups.

The project is entitled 'A Forgotten Landscape' and aims to restore the heritage of the Lower Severn Vale Levels as well as improving access and creating volunteering and learning opportunities. The project area is the foreshore and coastal floodplain of the River Severn from Avonmouth (including Lawrence Weston) in Bristol up to the boundary of South Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire. The term 'heritage' is used in its broadest sense to encompass the natural environment, archaeology, local history, local food production and traditional farming practices, and even historic and present transportation – the way man has used to cross the estuary over the centuries. The main priorities of the project at the delivery stage (Stage 2) are:

- Promote and contribute to the restoration of habitat and landscape, benefiting internationally important breeding and wintering birds; and helping to support a rich biodiversity, including protected and notable species of plants, amphibians, mammals, birds and invertebrates.
- Promote agri-environment schemes and support farmers to make Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship applications to benefit both the natural and cultural heritage of the Levels
- Promote and increase public access to the Levels landscape and its natural heritage for a range of user groups.
- Provide new education opportunities relating to both the natural and built heritage for school children and lifelong learning opportunities for all age groups.
- Enable active community participation and interaction with the natural heritage through volunteer programmes, including bird identification classes leading to a volunteer monitoring programme, and by the teaching of traditional skills such as coppicing, pollarding and hedge-laying.
- Improve understanding of, and community participation in, the historic environment and man's interrelationship with the Levels and Estuary by offering opportunities to undertake archaeological work.
- Promote and interpret the geology/geomorphology of the Levels and Estuary, increasing awareness of past landscapes/environments millions of years ago; the on-going, dynamic sedimentary geological processes; and the interrelationship between this and ecology.
- Promote and re-establish heritage skills and practices including salt marsh grazing, cheese-making, traditional fishing and cider making.

Ultimately the project aims to create a framework for the Lower Severn Vale Levels whereby a wide range of stakeholders, including local residents, schools and landowners, can help current and future generations enjoy, learn from and conserve this significant landscape.

A website has been set up: <http://www.aforgottenlandscape.org.uk/> and will develop over time.

Peter proposed that £400-£500 be put aside from the social fund for the provision of an interpretation board or a stile to support the Forgotten Landscape Project . This was seconded by Heather and a show of hands of all present indicated unanimous agreement to the proposal.

7. Possible Events for 2015

(i) **Pub Quiz:** 3 February at Filton Golf Club. £8pp incl food.

ACTION: Gill King

(ii) **4-day break in Isle of Wight HF house Mar 30 2014.** Basic cost £225pp (not including supplements). Car ferry c£25pp if 4 share and £15 petrol. Heather needs a deposit of £10 per person before 11 December.

ACTION: Heather Rickards

(ii) **Map Reading** course and follow up would be scheduled for February.

ACTION: Janet Milne

(iii) **Bowling at Hollywood Bowl:**

ACTION: Gill King

8 Retirement of current Committee Members

The Committee retired. Heather thanked Mike and Ann for their contributions to the committee. Mike volunteered to continue to liaise with S Glos council re the Forgotten Landscape project until he and Jan move away.

9 Election of Honorary Officers and Committee Members

The following appointments were made:

Position	Nomination	Proposed	Seconded
Chairman	Heather Rickards*	Peter Randall	Ann Light
Group Treasurer	Peter Randall*	Ann Light	Jean Williams
Group Secretary / Membership Secretary	Chris Everett*	Pauline Hart	Janet Milne
Group Publicity Officer	Sue Driver*	Chris Everett	Heather Rickards
Footpath Secretary	Allan Davies*	Heather Rickards	Chris Everett
Walks Coordinator	Joy Harrison*	Peter Randall	Jenny Aspinall
Group Web Editor	Ken Mill*	Joy Harrison	Gill King
Social Secretary	Gill King*	Peter Randall	Chris Everett
General Committee Member	Chris Gaymer*	Gill King	Heather Rickards
General Committee Member	Jean Williams*	Gill King	Heather Rickards
General Committee Member	Gloria Drury	Gill King	Heather Rickards

* Denotes Committee member during 2013/14

10 Appointment of a representative to the governing body of the Area

Chris Gaymer has agreed to attend Area meetings and report back to the committee whenever possible.

11 Appointment of Independent Examiner or Examiners: It was agreed that the present arrangement should continue whereby the Group utilised an ex-colleague of Ken Mill's to audit the accounts.

12 Any Other Urgent Business: None.

13 Date of the next AGM will be Sunday 15th November 2015. Venue tbc.

Heather closed the meeting at 15.00.