

SEVERNSIDE RAMBLERS GROUP

Minutes of 18th Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 15th November 2015 at Mafeking Hall, Pilning

The meeting was preceded by an illustrated talk by Jane Chapman from 'Ramblers Worldwide Holidays'

Present Jean Aellen, Jenny Aspinall, Jenny Ball, Morgan Baynham, Sue Bowerman, Helen Briggs, David Evans, Chris Everett (Secretary), Martin Firth, Charlie French, Chris Gaymer (Avon Area Rep), Will Gothard, Joy Harrison (Walks Co-ordinator), Pauline Hart, Gill King (Social Secretary), Paul Lees, John Lewis, Ann Light, Ken Mill (Web Master), Carolyn Muston, Robert Muston, Andy Pearson, Joyce Powell, Peter Randall (Treasurer), Heather Rickards (Chairman), Emma Smith, Ellie Townsend, John Turner, Mary Wickman, Jean Williams.

Copies of the Agenda, Minutes of 2014 AGM, and Accounts were circulated to those present.

1. **Introduction** Chairman Heather Rickards welcomed everyone to the meeting and Ken Mill read out an email addressed to the club from Janet and Mike, who are settling well into their new home in Yorkshire.
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Allan Davies (Footpath Secretary), Pam Doughty, Sue Driver (Publicity), Gloria Drury, Kathy Strawbridge and Geraldine Usher.
3. **Minutes of previous meeting held on 16 November 2014** were amended as follows:
 5. (i) (Chairman's Report) stated that the amounts received by the group when booking Ramblers Holidays were £5, £10 or £20. Ann Light informed us that the correct amounts are £10 for UK holidays, £20 for short-haul destinations and £30 for long-haul destinations.

Following this amendment the minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record. Ann Light proposed and Gill King seconded that the minutes be accepted.

4. **Matters arising from the Minutes of the 2014 AGM**
 5. (i) **Planned developments within the organisation:** Heather reported that following the initiative by the Ramblers Board of Trustees to propose improvements in governance, feedback had resulted in a 300 page document to be considered by the Trustees and discussed at General Council. The process is still ongoing.

5. **Officers' Reports**

(i) **Chairman**

A welcome to you all.

Thank you Gill for supplying us with excellent refreshments.

This is the 18th Annual meeting of Severnside Ramblers Group. We have been around since 1997, and some of the original members are still with us.

We have come to the end of another excellent year. We have enjoyed walking holidays in the Isle of Wight and to Selworthy, near Exmoor (thanks Gill and thanks to Carolyn and Robert who ran the quiz there which caused a bit of a challenge to the visiting U3A group). We have had skittles evening, quiz nights (thanks Gill) and a coach trip to sunny Swanage. (Thanks Jean) . We have also manned a stall at the big South Gloucestershire Show (thanks Chris Gaymer and her band of helpers) and, of course we have had many wonderful walks.

Leading a walk is rewarding, even if it is a commitment. You have to find a walk, test it out, submit it to the programme, re-walk it and then lead the Group. The hard work is appreciated and it is so nice that in this Group people take time to thank the leader at the end of the walk.

Sometimes when you recce a walk you find brambles flapping in your face. This is when a pair of secateurs is useful. Last year Ann Light suggested that we put to good use the money Severnside is given when our members go on holiday with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays. We bought secateurs and gave them to our busiest walk leaders. This year I have checked the records to find who else has led the most walks and deserves some secateurs! (Thank you Neil for procuring them.)

Jill Field

Gill King

Kathy Strawbridge

Doreen Luffman

Ros Robinson

Don Ford

Avon Area recently ran a course to train and advise walk leaders. They may well do another. Severnside may run its own sessions. My personal belief is that there should be no pressure to lead a walk, but if you do want to give it a try, these courses may be useful to you. We will inform you all when they are arranged. It may be that you prefer a less structured approach and would prefer to partner or "buddy up" with an experienced leader. Or even buddy up with an inexperienced one and work out together what to do!

Even if you never lead a walk, you are still supporting the Group by joining a Severnside Ramble. Some members don't even ramble, but their subscription helps to fund the ongoing effort of the Ramblers' Association to maintain and protect the thousands of miles of public footpaths in this country. (I have recently visited the States. A very beautiful country but they don't have the ability that we have to step out from our homes and almost instantly be on a public footpath. It is a privilege we should relish - and protect).

But, back to wonderful Severnside Group.

I want to say a big thank you to all the members of the committee. They are all busy people with very full lives - but when it comes to the Severnside Group they are keen, enthusiastic and USEFUL!

We are not big on bureaucracy (though Chris might not agree - a lot falls on her), we only have 3 meetings a year (plus the AGM), but everyone quietly does their bit and volunteers to do more when the need arises.

So thanks Chris Everett (our secretary), Chris Gaymer, (who represents us at Avon Area meetings), Peter, (our Treasurer), Ken, (who represents us on many ventures, but most noticeably runs our excellent website), Joy, (who sets up the walking programme), Allan, (our footpath officer) Sue,(our publicity officer) Gill,(our social secretary) and Jean and Gloria who make up the team.

You have all been brilliant - and you obviously enjoy your time on the committee as most of you have offered to stay on another year.

Three of us are bowing out. Sue, whose life and work keep her incredibly busy, will be leaving the committee but with typical loyalty has agreed to continue sending our monthly walk programme to local magazines until a replacement is found. Please have a word with her if you are interested in the role.

Do think about joining the committee. You would be on the committee of a very positive and successful Group.

Chris and I have come to the end of our statutory term of 3 years as secretary and chairman. We have enjoyed our roles, but are happy to finish and are confident that the Group will be in good hands.

I would like to make a personal thank-you to Chris. Her support and help to me has been invaluable. Despite her family commitments, her music, the house renovations and the ambitious walking holidays - still she got the Severnside work sorted - and gently reminded me what I had to do, and what I had forgotten. And sometimes she just quietly did it herself.

I couldn't have coped without you. Thanks Chris.

Heather Rickards, Chairman

(ii) Secretary / Membership Secretary

At the last AGM I reported that we had 152 members. Between then and now, numbers have fluctuated as some have left due to health issues, or in the case of Janet and Mike, moved away. However, we have been pleased to welcome several new members, and so numbers have remained steady. Like last year, I can report that we currently have 152 members.

There have been no reportable injuries on any of our walks this year, and the numbers on the walks have been steady. Friday Ambles continue to be a great success thanks to the hard work put in by the two Jeans. We did have a series of evening walks in the summer, but numbers were rather disappointing this year. We didn't attract any new members that way, but those of us who did take part enjoyed some beautiful summer evenings in good company.

I have enjoyed my time as secretary on the committee, and I thank Heather and Ken particularly for pointing me in the right direction when needed, and for Ellie for agreeing to take on the role as I step down. She'll do a great job, I'm sure.

Chris Everett, Group Secretary

(iii) Treasurer

As I did last year I have split the consolidated accounts into 2 to clearly show the income and expenditure on both accounts, which I hope you find easier to follow.

Group Account - £1,126.04 (includes £11.17 petty cash) as at 30th September 2015.

- Contributions from Area during the year were £100 down on the previous year in line with our budget proposals and membership numbers.
- Advertising revenue from Ramblers WW Holidays was the same as previously but commissions for holidays booked increased slightly.
- Costs for printing and circulating the Programme and Newsletter reduced considerably due partly to the introduction of 4 month programmes and partly due to electronic mailing.

The balance at the year-end was up by just over £200 but your Committee has agreed to allocate £500 from these funds for the Forgotten Landscape project run jointly by South Gloucestershire Council and various other bodies previously discussed at last years AGM.

Social Fund Account - £422.41 (includes £36.03 petty cash) as at 30th September 2015.

- There has been continued growing activity on this account by virtue of the success and number of social activities and various holidays undertaken throughout the year.
- This account is self-funding and although it appears we made a loss of £76.06 this can be accounted for by the payment of a pre-paid deposit in respect of the Gower weekend taking place in April 2016.

Role of Treasurer

I have continued to enjoy the role of Treasurer and as such I am willing to offer myself for re-election for the forthcoming year.

Peter Randall, Treasurer

(iv) Footpaths Officer

A couple of footpath problems were referred to South Glos by Jean Aellen: one at Milbury Heath and one at Hinton.

We were informed of some footpath closures and upgrades by SouthGlos:

1. The construction of the Stoke Gifford Transport Link (SGTL) led to the removal of the Network Rail overbridge at Curtis Lane, over which runs public footpath LWB15.
2. A footpath from Moorend to Hambrook - upgraded to bridleway.
3. A footpath in Patchway between Ashford Road and Gloucester Road has been include as a RoW .

I spent a pleasant couple of days at the South Glos show helping Chris Gaymer, Jo Wall, Ellie Townsend, & Jean Williams where we promoted Severnside, Ramblers in general and Rights of Way and Access Land. I collected one report of an obstructed footpath near Alveston but could not see a problem when I checked it.

Big PathWatch

You may have heard of the Ramblers Association initiative to record and report on the condition of all the rights of way in England and Wales. RA members and members of the public are being asked to select one or more National Grid kilometre squares from the Ordnance Survey and walk all the paths in that square. The techie ones can download a smart phone App that allows you record the information of the hoof. Give it a try on a walk in your local area. We all use rights of way and Ramblers do a lot to protect them. See

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/join-the-big-pathwatch.aspx?gclid=CPuLp52sisgCFSIOwwodBY8DtA>

At a recent Trustees meeting The Ramblers Association stated that 12,385 people had registered to take part in the Big Pathwatch.

- 39% of all squares have been adopted.
- 993 family packs have been downloaded.
- 68% of participants are new to the Ramblers.

Trustees noted that Pathwatch had featured on a recent Sunday night BBC Countryfile programme; resulting in 500 new people registering by Monday morning. But Trustees also noted that engagement from members was still relatively low and that more could be done to encourage them to participate.

On Sunday 6th December Heather & Joy will be Big Pathwatching. See Severnside Walks Programme for further details.

Allan Davies, Footpath Officer

(v) Publicity Officer

Severnside Ramblers walks are publicised monthly in various magazines across North Bristol.

The Observer newspaper (a free paper) also regularly advertises our walks in the "Whats On Section".

I have been advised that most new members, who walk with Severnside, have found us through the Observer.

Information on walks, changes to the programme and weekends away are all published on the web site helping to keep current members updated whilst also enticing new members with a look into the clubs various activities and events/ongoing.

A quarterly walks programme is printed and is sent to members who have requested a paper copy.

Information on the website is a quick and easy way of keeping members updated and cost effective. The publicity role may need to liaise with the web manager to gain the full potential of the website for prospective new walkers.

Government and Local Councils are still raising the awareness of "walking for health"; I have a contact for the Yate branch and would be happy to forward our programme on to them, should the committee have no objections.

Severnside Ramblers at present though and for the foreseeable future will need to continue to advertise through local magazines and the press as not all members nor all the public have access to the internet. However by maintaining these different channels of publicity, Severnside Ramblers are able to reach out to all at a very reasonable cost.

Sue Driver, Publicity Officer

(vi) Walks Programme Coordinator

Thanks go to all our walk leaders and those who do the pre walks with them – for keeping our programme going and responding favourably to my pleas to fill gaps in the programme. Your continued cooperation and enthusiasm has enabled our programme to have many interesting and different types of walk to suit the needs of members. I hope I am not tempting fate by saying that I hope it continues. We are lucky to have so many areas of interest to explore from Bristol. This all helps to make our group so enjoyable to be with and popular. We continue to avidly support day trips by coach and weekends away to take us further afield. This can be further done by going on the Wessex Wanderers Railway Walks– an opportunity to explore the wonderful countryside along the Bristol to Weymouth line both as a leader and/or a walker. There is a link on our site.

I have been liaising with Walking for Health who put on a programme for walks of a shorter nature – often by referral from a GP. They are very popular – so much so that South Glos extended the service to 'stepping forward' – which has 4-5 mile walks which often have 40+ walkers on. With cuts to the service, the authority is now concentrating on the very shortest walks. The other walks will still be offered. They do not find it intrusive to us to meet up on some of the longer walks to see if their walkers would like to join up with us

and for us to work together in this respect. The programme runs all year and is published online – so please help if you can.

Walks for the next programme please before the festive season means we are doing other things. Now agreed to be co-ordinator for Wessex Wanderers as like this sort of role a lot. Anyone any offers/ideas for our day trip by coach for next year?

Jean Williams expressed her thanks to Jean Aellen for her efforts which are making the Friday Ambles such a success. Walks typically attract over 20 walkers each time, and over the last year 64 people had taken part.

Joy Harrison, Walks Co-ordinator

(vii) Social Secretary

The social year of Severnside Ramblers started in Dec 2014 with a return visit to the Tortworth Estate for a pre-luncheon walk followed by a Christmas lunch at the Farmers Table.

The annual Ramblers Pub Quiz was held in February at the Filton Golf Club hosted by David and Caroline from Clevedon Ramblers. Helen Briggs arranged the venue and food, before we got down to the business of the quiz.

In April a group went over to the HF Hotel on the Isle of Wight for an enjoyable walking break even though the weather wasn't very good.

Recently at the end of October a large group travelled down to the HF Hotel at Selworthy for a 3 night break. The weather was superb and some of us were walking in shorts and t-shirts on the 1st November!!!! Two members, mentioning no names, actually went paddling on Bossington Beach. There was some excellent walking, very good food and entertainment in the form of a pub quiz, slide show, grope a sock and the Rugby Cup Final, thanks to the hotel staff.

Next year Jenny and John have planned a weekend of walking on the Gower in April which I believe is already fully booked and a reserve list is in place. Also we will look out for some last minute deals from HF and there is suggestion of a break in Yorkshire led by our old friends Janet and Mike.

Andy Pearson thanked Gill for the Selworthy trip and presented her with a DVD of photos taken at that weekend.

Gill King, Social Secretary

(viii) Web Editor

Website

In the meeting, Pauline Hart expressed her appreciation of the website and thanks to Ken on behalf of all the group, saying that it was the best of all the Ramblers' Groups that she had seen.

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

Many thanks to the photographers in our midst who provide photos from our walks. 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. This has resulted in one request for further information from a member of the public, so is worth continuing.

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.

Other Initiatives

Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF): This is an independent statutory group that advises on access to the outdoors in Bath & NE Somerset, Bristol City and South Glos. The group represents users, landowners and other interests who advise the Councils and other organisations in the area. Meets 3 times a year.

South Glos RofW Liaison Group: Representing Severnside on the RoW network.

Ken Mill, Web Editor

(viii) Avon Area

Since the institution of a new Chairman and the continued enthusiastic efforts of Susan Carter the Avon Area secretary, Avon Area has become more relevant, dynamic and focussed. Their management committee meets every two months and covers day to day matters. This feeds into the main committee which meets three times a year in different venues around the area. The summer meeting discussed membership and publicity matters. From the group reports, it appears that Severnside is one of the most active groups in the area, with thriving membership and popular events.

Avon Area News is also much improved.

Chris Gaymer, Avon Area Representative

6. Local Projects

Footpath Surveys: Ken and a number of volunteer helpers have surveyed over 50 miles of footpaths in the local area for South Glos Council. This helps them to budget and prioritise repair work and benefits us by fostering positive links between Ramblers and our local authority.

Forgotten Landscape: This project aims to restore the heritage of the Severn Vale area between Shepperdine and Avonmouth. It is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and will run until 2018. We have suggested short walking routes which may be included in a booklet or pamphlets. The organisers were very grateful to hear that we have put aside £500 towards an interpretation board. This funding would be recognised, with our logo, on the board.

Coastal Access – Aust to Brean: We are interested in the section from the Old Severn Bridge to the Avonmouth Bridge. Landowners are being consulted regarding possible routes and improvements to the Severn Way. Natural England is expected to publish the options for this route around spring next year. The

plan is that it should open in 2017. There is also the possibility of looking at circular routes and long distance routes that could link to the coastal path. This would need to be taken up by Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils.

7. Possible Events for 2016

(i) **Pub Quiz:** Filton Golf Club.

**ACTION: Gill King – organise
Helen Briggs – book venue**

(ii) **Gower weekend in April** (booked)

(iii) **Map Reading** course and follow up. Ken prepared to run if volunteers offer to help.

ACTION: all

(iv) **Bowling at Hollywood Bowl**

ACTION: Gill King

(v) **Coach Trip during the summer.**

(vi) **Ramblers Volunteer Development Days.** Gloucester on Sunday 3 June 2016. Booking page at <http://ramblersvolunteerdays.eventbrite.co.uk/?s=31534915>

8 Retirement of current Committee Members

The Committee retired.

9 Election of Honorary Officers and Committee Members

The following appointments were made:

Position	Nomination	Proposed	Seconded
Chairman	Ken Mill	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
Group Treasurer	Peter Randall*	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
Group Secretary / Membership Secretary	Ellie Townsend	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
Group Publicity Officer	Position vacant		
Footpath Secretary	Allan Davies*	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
Walks Coordinator	Joy Harrison*	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
Group Web Editor	Ken Mill*	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
Social Secretary	Gill King*	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
Avon Area Rep.	Chris Gaymer*	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
General Committee Member	Jean Williams*	Ann Light	Jean Aellen
General Committee Member	Gloria Drury*	Ann Light	Jean Aellen

* Denotes Committee member during 2014/15

Post meeting note: - Charlie French kindly offered to stand as a General Committee Member.

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

Chris Gaymer was duly elected.

11 Appointment of Independent Examiner or Examiners: It was agreed that the present arrangement should continue as Ian Weston, an ex-colleague of Ken Mill's is prepared to continue auditing the accounts.

12 Any Other Urgent Business: Ken thanked the outgoing members of the committee and AGM attendees. Gill King presented Heather and Chris with gifts of plant arrangements.

13 **Date of the next AGM** will be Sunday 20th November 2016. Venue tbc.

14 Ken closed the meeting at 15.00.