

Minutes of Severnside Ramblers AGM held at Mafeking Hall, Redwick Road Pilning BS35 4LL on Sunday 23rd November 2025

Attendees

Christine Turner	Chair
Christine Pankhurst	Group Secretary
Wendy Spooner	Membership Secretary
Bob Smyth	Treasurer
Mark Hill	Web Editor
Cathy Hunsley	Footpath Secretary
Gill King	Social Secretary
Sylvia Popham	Avon Area Representative
Jean Williams	Committee
Ken Mill	Colin Hunsley
Joy Harrison	Sharon Hooper
Terri Arman	Sylvia Seneschall
Patrick Kelly	Brenda Smyth
Jill Parkinson	Peter Randall
Caroline Jefferies	David Jefferies
Nick Rostern	Heather Rickards
Geoffrey Poole	Jacque Chinn
Sue Bowerman	Peter Spring
Don Ford	Chris Everett
Les Davison	

1)Welcome - Christine Turner welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. She also expressed her thanks to Jean and Gill for organising and serving the excellent buffet lunch.

2)Apologies for absence were received from- Sue Lancaster, Elaine Coulthard, Jean Aellen, Allan Davies, Helen & Howard Windsor, George Whyte & Pauline Hart, Kathy Strawbridge, Val Johnson, Steve Goodenough, Carolyn Muston, Andy George, Sue Budge and Mark Flint

3)Minutes of AGM 2024- Copies of the Minutes had been circulated to the Members prior to the meeting and Christine P drew attention to the proposed changes as outlined on the Agenda. They were accepted as a true record by Jean Williams and seconded by Christine Turner.

4)Matters arising- There were no matters arising.

5)Officers' Reports-

a)Chair- Christine T read her report as follows;

“Thank you to all our membership for supporting our Programme of walks and our various social events and trips. In particular I’d like to thank the committee for all they do in making this Severnside group so active and enjoyable. There have been changes during the year, Ramblers are more prescriptive about Walk leader training and First aid for example. There is a governance review coming which may have impacts for us of which more later. AS I avoid the internal politics of Ramblers - as agreed when I accepted this job - the governance changes - when/if they happen will simply be something we have to absorb, or we choose to leave the Ramblers organisational structure. These are items for wider discussion. Thank you all for your support during the last year.”

b) Membership Secretary- Wendy read her report as follows;

“I am pleased to have this opportunity to share the Membership Secretary’s report with you today. Overall, the membership of our group has dropped a little over the year. At the end of last year, we had 187 members and currently our membership is 183 including 3 affiliates. During the year we gained 22 new members but lost 28. Over the year we gain a few new members each quarter which is always welcome but also lose a few, due to people moving to other groups or resignations, due to such things as; being unable to manage the walks anymore or work commitments, etc. If we can hold the current numbers that would be good, if we can increase them that would be even better. I generally take the opportunity to mention Ramblers to people and point them in the direction of the Ramblers website whenever I can but any ideas on how to increase and maintain the membership would be appreciated. As an aside, the numbers of members requiring postal information now stands at only 12. This is great news and allows me to get information out to everyone more speedily and ensure you are kept up to date.”

c) Programme Secretary- In Sue’s absence Christine P read her report as follows;

“WALKS PROGRAMME Walks coordinator report - AGM 23rd November 2025 Once again the group has offered a varied walks programme. As usual we aimed for a Sunday walk every week of the year, and a leisurely Friday Amble fortnightly in the months of February to November. My thanks go to Jean Aellen for working hard to coordinate the Friday walks; as usual all Fridays were allocated and I understand the walks were very well attended. In addition we had a welcome ‘extra walk’ on a Friday, falling in a week when there wouldn’t normally be an amble, and the memorial walk for Andy Pearson on a Wednesday. Sundays have been more difficult to fill, and over the year there were 11 Sundays when no walk was offered. These vacant slots are increasing year by year – for example last year there were 7 (if we disregard Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve) and the year before there were only 3. I believe the walks which did take place generally attracted a good number of walkers, both from Severnside and other groups. The record for a Sunday must go to Geoff Mullett’s walk where there were around 30 walkers. Fortunately there weren’t too many stiles! LEADERS Huge thanks to all our leaders, many of whom have offered multiple walks in each programme. It is becoming increasingly difficult to fill the slots on both Fridays and Sundays. I believe Jean has now only 9 active leaders for Fridays, and of the 15 who have led this year on Sundays, 4 are currently unable to lead for health reasons. On a positive note, several people who have joined us from other groups have been actively leading, and one of our leaders has been able to return after a long absence. We also had one completely new leader this year who has contributed both Friday and Sunday walks – but we desperately need more! Do get in touch if you are at all interested, it’s not difficult! TRAINING As I’m sure everyone knows, Ramblers now require every leader to complete

training. New leaders have had to do this for a year or more, but existing leaders were exempt. This has now changed and we all need to be recognised by Ramblers as qualified leaders by the end of this year. I think it's fair to say that this requirement has caused feelings of irritation and resentment. However, please can I ask all leaders to bite the bullet and comply as we really can't afford to lose any of you. After the end of the year I won't be able to allocate a walk to any unqualified leader, and such a leader would not be covered by Ramblers insurance. There are two online modules to complete (Preventing & Managing Incidents and Walk Leadership foundations) plus The Walk Leader Handbook to read. They are very straightforward and take maybe 2 to 3 hours in total to complete - you don't need to do it all at one sitting. I've been monitoring the group's progress and there are still 14 leaders who need to do this; of these 8 are currently active, and I'll be reminding them again by email very soon. If anyone has difficulty accessing the material please get in touch. Many thanks to the 18 leaders who have already completed. WALKS FOR THE MONTHS TO COME There are 3 free Sundays in the current programme to fill, plus the whole of next year! Please get in touch if you'd like to book a date."

Joy then pointed out that there is an exemption for some leaders to do the online training and that is to certify that they have led more than 12 walks in the past 3 years.

d) Footpath Secretary- Cathy read out her report as follows;

"This year has been relatively quiet with regards to footpath issues. I have kept an eye on South Gloucestershire planning applications for those which affect Rights of Way. There have been no applications which I felt could affect the enjoyment of walkers. There have been a number of footpath diversion and closure orders circulated for comment. Most have been follow up stages of previous consultations and are not contentious so I have not commented. The most recent informal consultation relates to closure of the footpath, and temporary diversion, which cross the railway line north of Charfield. This is currently an informal consultation and formal consultation will follow. As a result of my professional expertise I do not intend to oppose this order. Should any other Severnside Ramblers wish to object I can let them have the details when they are published. During the year, the group received several reports of blocked footpaths. I refer people to the South Glos website to formally report these issues as the council have both the information on who the landowner is as well as the power to require the landowner to act. If I continue in this role next year I would like to see if I can set up a group of members who are willing to react at short notice and investigate issues, probably without a full recce."

Heather then stood up to talk about a matter that she had been pursuing. She has become involved with the "Save Your Footpath" initiative which encourages people to follow up any problems with regard to any paths which were in danger of being lost. There are 3 small ones close to her at Severn Beach which are in a poor state of repair. Heather has managed to fill out the copious amount of forms that were required and has successfully achieved their definitive inclusion on a map. However due to their poor state she contacted Lindsay Saunders who is our contact at South Glos. Council only to be told that they were unable to help as they were not legally responsible. Following this Heather then referred to Ramblers

who initially were very helpful and thought that the Council were at fault. However after further investigation they came back saying that the Council were in fact correct and have now referred Heather to the local Parish Council to be discussed at their next meeting to see if it can offer any help from volunteers. She was very frustrated by the fruitlessness of the exercise.

e) Web Editor- Mark read the following report;

“The website is maintained on a regular basis with regular updates of walks, photographs and walking information. Our website is hosted by Ramblers-Webs.org.uk which is funded centrally by Ramblers. 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. Our website remains the primary source of information relevant to our Group.”

Heather asked how we should go about getting photos onto our website? Mark said that if they are sent to him he has a link through Flickr to upload them. Ken said that he too was happy to do it as Claire Cox takes a number of photos for Facebook and he too can convert them to Flickr through his own account.

f) Social Secretary- Gill read her report as follows;

“Our Christmas meal last December was at The Bell in Old Sodbury preceded by a very enjoyable walk around the Frome Valley led by Christine Turner. It was well attended and weather fairly good for the walk. We are returning to the Anchor at Oldbury on Severn this year for our Christmas meal and there are still a few places left. The pub quiz was once again held at Filton Golf Club and was very well attended. Bob Smyth’s team won. The winners will put together the quiz for February 2026. Our annual break this year was in October and members spent 3 nights at the HF hotel at Selworthy. Walks on Exmoor were led by Geoffrey Poole Gill King and Heather Rickards., and Jean Williams organised a game of Pictionary on the Sat evening. I am happy to continue as Social Secretary for another year and if anyone has any ideas for events then please let me know. As well as the quiz in February there will be a trip away to Dolgellau in October and hopefully a skittles evening. So watch this space”

Gill then confirmed that the date of the Quiz Night has been set for 21st February and once again will be held at Filton Golf Club. Last year’s winning team which included Bob Smyth will be asked to organize and set the questions.

6) Treasurer’s Report- As Christine T has been maintaining the Accounts this year on behalf of Bob she talked through our Profit & Loss account which had previously been circulated at the meeting. Our Group A/C remains stable despite a slight overspend on last year due to our donation to British Red Cross in respect of the First Aid Course they held on our behalf. With regard to our Social A/C this currently is looking very healthy so much so that Area have tried to claim some money from us. Chris has put forward a strong case against this as we have a number of outstanding liabilities. She strongly believes that our money should be

for OUR benefit and not that of others. One way around this would be to open our own separate account. Peter Randall said that this was something which was discussed when he was treasurer and thinks that this is worth doing sooner rather than later. Chris thanked Nick for his auditing of the accounts.

N.B. Post meeting Chris T has made enquiries of 2 new accounts which might be suitable for us to be discussed at our next committee meeting.

7) Area Officer Report- Sylvia reported that the proposed Ramblers EGM which was to cover the Governance Review and to be held on 6th December will now be a consultation only with no decisions likely to be made until the AGM on 26th April. We are allowed 2 delegates and she urged that this is taken up. Although Sylvia is stepping down as Severnside Representative she will still be taking an active role and will report back to us any relevant developments.

8) Christmas Meal- This year it will be held at The Anchor Inn, Oldbury on Severn BS35 1QA on 15th December at 2pm. Gill said that there are still one or two spaces left. Cathy offered to lead a walk beforehand.

9) Summer Coach Trip- Jean announced that she will be booking the 2026 trip to The Mumbles. The proposed date is Sunday 12th July.

10) Forthcoming Events- As well as those already mentioned Gill said that she is also looking into arranging a Skittles Evening most probably at The Plough Inn at Pilning to be held in the Spring.

11) Proposed changes to be made under Ramblers Governance Review and the effect on Severnside Ramblers future- Christine T opened by setting out the position so far which is that Focus Groups were set up by Ramblers to look into such things as developing the website, simplifying the structure and finances. Unfortunately not much time was given for feedback hence the EGM which was set to take place on 6th December has now been changed to a consultation in order to review the changes further. Christine then introduced a discussion to seek views as to whether we should consider leaving Ramblers as full members and that Severnside becomes an affiliated club instead. She has produced a sheet listing some of the pros and cons of this and it was circulated amongst the members and they were invited to offer their views. Nick said that he had been looking into the background of Ramblers accounts and said that they didn't seem too healthy as there have been staff cut backs and so it looked as though they were under financial pressure. Other points that were raised were as follows;

- Walk leader training would cost £35 through Stride.
- Recommended Comprehensive insurance approx. £318.28 per annum depending on numbers. This was understood would cover personal accident on walks.
- We would need to set up our own Constitution.

- Potential new leaders are currently put off by the training required.
- National Trust volunteers have to undergo regular training.
- We would still need to attract experienced Leaders in order to offer good quality walks.
- Anyone still wishing to support Ramblers would pay twice.
- Our walks would not be advertised on Ramblers website so future membership numbers may suffer.
- Should we seek guidance from another Affiliated Club e.g. Thornbury Ramblers?
- Geoff is an ex-chair of Thornbury Ramblers and so has experience of both models.
- There would potentially be extra work for the Committee.
- Ramblers claim to be membership led but appear to squander money.
- Retail discount can also be obtained from other sources e.g. National Trust.

The conclusion and general consensus of opinion was that we should wait until we learn the outcome of Ramblers Review which will probably be at their AGM in April. In the meantime we should approach Thornbury Ramblers for some guidance and investigate transferring our Social A/c into a new one.

12) Retirement of Committee Members- Christine T, Christine P, Bob, Sylvia and Elaine all announced their wish to resign from the Committee. Gill Rodger had resigned her membership during the year.

13) Election of Committee 2026- Following the lack of members coming forward to fill the vacant posts the committee was elected as follows;

Post	Name	Proposed	Seconded
Chair	Christine Turner	Heather	Gill
Group Secretary	Christine Pankhurst	Jean	Gill
Membership Secretary	Wendy Spooner	Gill	Christine T
Treasurer	Cathy Hunsley	Jean	Christine T
Walk Co-ordinator/Programme Secretary	Sue Lancaster	Gill	Christine T
Web Editor	Mark Hill	Ken	Wendy
Footpath Secretary	Cathy Hunsley	Jean	Gill
Social Secretary	Gill King	Christine T	Jean
Publicity	-	-	-
Avon Area	-	-	-
Committee	Jean Williams Bob Smyth	Christine P	Gill

14)Appointment of Auditor- Nick Rostern agreed to continue in this role.

15)Avon Area AGM- Sylvia confirmed that this will be hosted by Kingswood Group and held at Hanham Community Centre on Saturday 28th February. There will be a short walk beforehand. Everyone is welcome. More details to follow.

16)Any Other Business- Joy stood up and said that after 10 years of coordinating walks for WWRW that she was standing down. She will however continue to be involved but the role will be split with assistance from Sylvia and others. Despite a few hiccups with the trains the Group continues to be successful and on one walk there were 30 people. This year had been their 30th Anniversary and they had attracted some new members and also leaders. She thanked Severnside for advertising all their walks and Ken for maintaining their website.

17)Date and venue of next AGM- This will be held on Sunday 22nd November 2026. Christine P asked whether Members were happy to return to Mafeking Hall or select a new venue and it was agreed that we should stay with Mafeking.

N.B. Post meeting Jill Parkinson suggested looking into the suitability of Almondsbury Old School Hall as a more “central” venue. This will be done before the next committee meeting.

The meeting was then closed at 3.10pm