

SEDGEMOOR RAMBLERS

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in Woolavington Village Hall on Saturday 25th October 2025 at 2pm

PRESENT: John Perry (Chair), Mike Aldridge (Treasurer), Linda Hay (Secretary/Publicity), Rhona Hall (Membership Secretary), Edward Levy (Programme Secretary), Helen Young (Social Secretary), Tony Fawle (Working Party Lead), Peter Wallis, Dee Wallis, Sharon Perry, Sabrina Cecconi, Steve Bryant, Hazel Boxer, Tina Ross, Steve Young, Sandra Matthews, Chris Preston, Anna Norris, Jean Finken, Jenny Fawle, Carole Baker, Franklin Apfel, Sara Chick, Alan Chick.

1. **WELCOME:** John Perry welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked walkers for their attendance.
2. **APOLOGIES:** David Shaw, Esme Gilling, Brian Gilling, Pam Wills.
3. **MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 26TH OCTOBER 2024**
These were accepted as a true record.
Proposer: Sharon Perry
Seconded: Rhona Hall
4. **MATTERS ARISING:**
There were no matters arising.
5. **OFFICERS' REPORTS:**

Chair – John Perry

I would like to thank the Committee for their continued hard work in running our group. Thank you to Mike our Treasurer, Ed our Programme Secretary, Rhona our Membership Secretary, Linda our Secretary and Publicity Officer, and Helen our Social Secretary; also to Tony for leading our footpath Working Parties. A lot of dedication goes on behind the scenes so we can enjoy the companionship and the walks provided by our group. Thank you.

We have enjoyed a good year of walks, despite the challenges of our unpredictable weather, with a few walks cancelled due to high winds or even extreme heat! I would like to thank all our Walk Leaders for their tremendous efforts to plan, recce and lead our weekend and evening walks.

Unfortunately, we cancelled the Summer Outing this year due to low numbers booking for the coach trip to Ilfracombe. We also saw fewer people attending our longer walks on Sundays, and low numbers on some other walks at times. With this in mind, we conducted a survey of members in August to find out what members wanted from our walks, and to elicit suggestions for how we can ensure our group continues to thrive. I promised to give

feedback on the survey results at our AGM – I will cover this towards the end of the agenda.

I look forward to the year of walking ahead. Also, next year is the 50th anniversary of Sedgemoor Ramblers, and we will be marking this tremendous landmark. More on this later in the AGM.

Treasurer – Mike Aldridge

The accounts for 1st October 2024 until 30th September 2025 have been audited by Oliver Smith as being accurate and copies have been circulated.

It has been a very quiet year. Some points to note from our receipts:

We received £206.30 from Central Office towards our running costs. This is lower than previous years due to a fall in membership. Next year they have increased our basic allowance to £1.10 per member and £100 for the group. As we have 106 members @ £1.10 plus £100, our allowance will be £216.60.

Next year we have our 50th anniversary; I made a budget request for extra funds to help with our celebrations. Because our bank balance is rather healthy we may not get what I have asked for. No news as yet.

The £5 was from donations at the AGM last year.

On the payments section self-explanatory really, with hire of hall, audit fee, and boot engraving.

You will notice we didn't spend any funds on posting this year, a thank you to Rhona. I wonder what she used was it carrier pigeon or Burnham-on-Sea seagulls? Only 8 programmes are now sent by post now with a couple hand-delivered.

The miscellaneous section includes prizes at the Xmas meal and summer lunch. We also gave some flowers to Karen after her fall, glad to see she has made a recovery.

The bank balances at 30th September are as shown.

Membership – Rhona Hall

Following quite a steep decline in membership last year, the position has been more stable this year with only a slight reduction from last year. We currently have 108 members which includes four affiliate members. Affiliate members walk with other groups, joining us occasionally.

Over the last year we have lost 21 members, two of whom remained in Ramblers but left the area and one who changed their assigned group. Of the remaining 18 leavers, one died, 12 resigned and the remaining five allowed their membership to lapse,

Over the same period, we have gained 18 new members.

If you look at the table below you will see that national membership is on the increase although this is not reflected in the Somerset area, where overall the position is relatively stable. As for last year our local age profile is over 70, whilst the national average is 68. The only major change locally is that a new group called West Mendip has formed and appears to have taken members from the Mendip group.

Group	Membership (start to end of year)	Average age	Volunteer %
National	103,808 -106,091	68	15%
Sedgemoor	110 - 104	71	26%
Mendip	332 – 280	72	19%
South Somerset	216 - 220	73	16%
West Somerset	124 – 127	71	26%
Taunton Deane	261 – 246	72	17%
Woodspring	219 – 219	72	20%
West Mendip	47	70	63%

Secretary – Linda Hay

This has been my second year as secretary, and I have continued to enjoy preparing paperwork and taking minutes for our quarterly meetings and our AGM.

I continue to monitor our email regularly and pass on to the committee and wider membership anything that may be of interest.

Working Party – Tony Fawle

The last 12 months work has involved replacing old wooden stiles with the new Marlow single gates. 5 in total. Bawdrip 3, Enmore 1, Goathurst 1.

We also repaired a bridge with new rails at Durleigh and Stawell as well as path clearance at these locations.

As you know we plan to meet every month. This year, due to different issues we had 3 cancellations. The first was bad weather, the second Somerset County Council were unable to get the furniture on site and lastly, in September, the landowner refused to allow removal of stiles for metal gates. Thurloxton was the location, by the phone box, which many of you know the route over 4 stiles is tricky. Glyn Edwards, our Area Warden for Rights Of Way will try to turn this around and persuade the landowner. Jobs are not always straightforward but Glyn sends us videos to help us with the work.

My thanks go to John, Mike, Ian, Stephen and Richard who are the working party.

Programme – Ed Levy

I again took on doing the job of programme secretary at last year's AGM. Following the fall in the number of walks in our programme I was hoping that I might be able to stop the downturn and increase the number of walks that the group run.

It has been a difficult year, and my hopes have not been met. The number of walks we run continues to decline, especially longer Sunday walks. Sunday had been our traditional walking day with a walk every Sunday. In recent years Sunday walks have declined, and many Sundays are left unfilled. Saturdays fare a little better and generally we do manage to run 2 Saturday walks per month.

Attendances on our walks have fallen. Gone are the days when we would have at least 15 and sometimes as many as 25 attending. Some walk leaders have reported no attendances from Sedgemoor members with one or two turning up from other groups. This has made some walk leaders feel it is not worth the time and effort of planning and recceing a walk resulting in them ceasing to lead walks. Our pool of walk leaders has consequently reduced. We have been unable to attract new walk leaders and with our regular walk leaders becoming older some have become less able to lead. This has also led to the decline. We have new members but as yet, none of them have come forward to lead walks. In addition, walk leaders now need to complete training. It was suggested that we should introduce mentoring for new walk leaders.

I am currently preparing the walking programme for the period 1st December to 31st March. I have 33 dates I wish to fill and at present I have filled 15 only. I find I get little response to my request for walks.

I planned a summer outing to North Devon and travelled there to recce my walk. The response to the outing was poor and it became clear that I would not get enough participants to cover the cost of the hire of the coach. Regrettably, I therefore had to cancel the outing. We don't want to abandon the summer outing in future years. We realise the cost of the trip has gone up and for a couple can prove a large outlay. So, for coming years we are considering arranging a day out to somewhere on the south coast going in members cars. Those attending would share the cost with their car driver. We would also book a meal to attend after the walk either at the venue of the walk or a restaurant or pub on the journey home.

Our walks are usually very enjoyable, they are not just about walking but also very sociable occasions, meeting old and new friends and catching up with one another. We need to try a little bit harder to make sure they continue.

Social Secretary – Helen Young

New Year's Lunch – January 2025

After a very enjoyable New Year's lunch at the Duck at Burtle in January 2024, it was decided as it is such a busy time of year before Christmas to continue with a post Christmas lunch for 2025, this time it was held at the Bath Arms in Cheddar on 12 January 2025.

Those wishing to attend provided their food orders in advance from a wide choice that was available.

The event was very well attended and everyone said how lovely the food was. The service was excellent.

Summer Afternoon Tea

Rather than have the traditional Summer Lunch in a village hall and self-catering for the food, an afternoon tea was booked instead at Leather and Lace in Chilton Polden.

There was a walk around the area beforehand, thanks to John for organising; and the sandwiches, variety of cakes and scones provided was excellent. The weather was lovely, it was a great opportunity to relax and chat. The event was very well supported.

New Year's Lunch – January 2026

The Bath Arms in Cheddar has been booked again for our Post Christmas lunch; this will be on 18 January at 12:30pm. The chair, John, has sent out details of this event so please do contact him to book a place if you would like to attend. Currently, 22 members have signed up.

AND FINALLY.... After a great deal of thought and deliberation, I have decided to step down from the role of Social Secretary. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped with organising all of the above events. I will continue to be an active member of the Ramblers and I will continue to help with any activities in the future.

Publicity – Linda Hay

This year I have continued to put entries monthly into Local Reach. We are only able to request an entry into one edition each month, although our group covers several Local Reach areas. In recent months I have started to rotate the entries between the Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, Bridgwater, and Glastonbury and Street editions. This means that our piece should be seen by a greater number of people across Sedgemoor.

I received posters and leaflets from Central Office to which I added our group name and email. I have dropped these posters and leaflets off in Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea libraries and a poster to Tesco in Burnham-on-Sea.

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

John Perry stated that the following serving members of the committee were willing to stand for re-election:

- John Perry – **chair**
- Mike Aldridge – **Treasurer**
- Rhona Hall – **Membership Secretary**
- Linda Hay – **Secretary and Publicity Officer**
- Edward Levy – **Programme Secretary**

He asked if anyone wished to stand for any of these posts. There were no offers. These posts were dealt with together.

Proposer: Sharon Perry

Seconded: Tony Fawle

All were in favour and so these were all duly re-elected.

Social Secretary

There were no volunteers for this position and so it remains vacant.

Ordinary Members

There were no volunteers.

For the planning of our 50th anniversary celebrations we will form a working party.

7. MEMBERS' SURVEY RESULTS – John Perry

I was very pleased to receive replies from 27 members of our group. The key messages received, and the actions the committee has already taken or will implement next year, as a result of the feedback, are as follows:

(i) Walk start times: more flexibility was suggested for the start time of some of our walks; in particular for the shorter walks on Saturdays.

The committee agreed this was a good idea as it would encourage more walk leaders and give members more choice for walks that suited them.

Ed has written to walk leaders to let them know of this change.

It will always be clear in the walks programme as to what time each walk starts. This will be up to the walk leader to determine. However, the general guide of 11:00 start on Saturdays and 10:30 on Sundays will remain in place.

(ii) Sunday walks: as we have fewer people attending the longer walks on Sundays, a suggestion was to allow some shorter walks in the programme on Sundays than has traditionally been the case.

The committee agreed that with low attendances for most Sunday walks it would be good to include some shorter walks in our programme.

Ed has written to walk leaders to let them know this.

(iii) Summer Outing: the consensus was that the cost of coach hire has now become too expensive for the traditional coach outing to be viable.

Instead of a coach outing, the committee has decided to include a "bookable walk" in the Summer programme on a Saturday that is a bit further afield (say Beer, Sidmouth etc.). This will be nominated as a "Summer Outing". The idea is for people to organise lift shares and have a pub/restaurant meal option after the walk.

(iv) Safety on walks: a couple of members have fallen on our walks this year. Also, a few survey replies pointed out that on occasions a walk has been much longer than publicised, which can cause difficulties.

Other suggestions were that walk leaders should indicate the number of stiles on a walk. Some members find stiles difficult, so this extra information will help them choose a suitable walk to join.

It was also suggested that all walk leaders should carry a basic first aid kit.

The committee agreed with all these points.

Ed has written to our walk leaders to remind them about stating the mileage of walks accurately and to state the number of stiles.

We agreed to fund the cost of basic first aid kits for walk leaders, if they so wish. Ed has written to walk leaders – they can contact Mike, our Treasurer, who will then provide them with a first aid kit. Mike has already purchased some kits and will purchase more if required.

There was a discussion regarding safety on walks with some suggestions. Some members felt that individuals should take responsibility for their own safety. However, if the walk leader has a First Aid kit, should there be an incident, we will know a basic kit is available. In the case of an incident, the walk leader can take control whilst someone else could assist the casualty. It is recommended that ICE (In Case of Emergency) cards are carried by walk members. A question was raised regarding register forms for walks and collecting emergency contact details of visiting walkers.

(v) New walk leaders: some replies indicated that people would like to lead a walk, but felt they lacked the confidence or experience to do so. A suggestion was for some of our experienced walk leaders to volunteer as “Walk leading mentors”.

The committee agreed this was a good idea.

Please let John or Ed know if you would be willing to volunteer as a mentor –we will then let the group know who you are.

There is also some excellent training material on the Ramblers website for walk leaders. Plus I have some leaflets on walk leading, which were handed out at the AGM.

The following members volunteered to act as mentors: Edward Levy, Helen Young, Jean Fincken and Tony Fawle.

8. 50th ANNIVERSARY OF SEDGEMOOR RAMBLERS 2026

Next year is the 50th Anniversary of our group! To mark this significant achievement, the committee has started looking into how we can celebrate this occasion. We are thinking of holding a celebration event, possibly to be held in Woolavington Village Hall, on a Saturday evening next Summer.

We are also looking into the provision of a bench with a commemorative plaque, to be sited by a footpath in our area. We have begun discussions with Bawdrip Parish Council on possible sites, with the help of Glyn Edwards, our Somerset area footpath warden. Tony Fawle is liaising with Glyn.

Our idea is to have a walk on the Saturday afternoon, which would enable us to inspect the commemorative bench, and then enjoy the celebration event in the evening.

A working party will be formed to plan and organise our celebrations, which Helen Young volunteered to join. Please let the committee know if you have any thoughts on these ideas or would like to help organise any part of the celebrations.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) We were advised by a member that Marion Addicraft, a former member, died on Wednesday 15th October.
- (ii) Mike, our treasurer, announced that we have been granted additional funds of £950 towards our 50th anniversary celebrations. He was only advised of this on Friday 24th October. Mike had enquired about the possibility of some commemorative waymarkers that could be placed on posts in our area but unfortunately Central Office have said no.

The meeting closed at 3:20pm.