

SEDGEMOOR RAMBLERS

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in The Loft, St. Mary's Church Centre Nether Stowey on Saturday, 21st October 2017 at 13.30

PRESENT: Tony Fawle (in the Chair), Jenny Fawle (Social Secretary), Tina Ross (Membership Secretary), Mike Aldridge (Treasurer), Edward Levy (Programme Secretary), Alan Chick (Footpaths Secretary), Jean Fincken (Secretary), Hazel Boxer (Ordinary Member), Sara Chick (Ordinary Member), Esmé Gilling, Brian Gilling, Jackie Morris, Dave Morris, Sandra Mathews, Rhona Hall, Pam Wills, Pat Bawler, John Aldridge, Mary Epps, Rose Callard, Gill Goodwin.

- 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Judith Newberry, Eva Bell, Carole Baker, Richard Barnes, Maribel Hamilton, Jan Horn, Mike Tompsett, Margaret Welch, Chris Preston, Karen & John Robinson, Peter & Dee Wallis

- 2 **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 22nd OCTOBER 2016:**

These were agreed and accepted as a true record.

- 3 **MATTERS ARISING:**

There were no matters arising.

- 4 **OFFICERS' REPORTS:**

CHAIRMAN (Tony Fawle)

This is my last year as Chair after 9 enjoyable years, during which time the group celebrated 40 years of rambling, placed a commemorative bench and organised its first walking festival. We also saw the extension of the coast path. All this, as well as enjoying the wonderful walks in our area.

My thanks to all who lead walks, thus ensuring the continuity of the group. In my time as Chair some have sadly moved on and new people have joined the group, which is always refreshing.

In particular, a big thank you to all who have worked on the Committee in those past 9 years. In order for our group to run smoothly it is important to have a full Committee. I know that people enjoy serving as can be seen by the enthusiasm shown at meetings. We are saying goodbye to Sara and Alan this year and I would like to thank them for their valued contribution.

I would also like to thank Jenny for the help and support she has given me since I took the Chair. I had just retired when she came home from a meeting and said that no-one had come forward and without a Chairman the group could fold! After a good night's sleep I thought about it and said "We can't have that" and I volunteered, even though I wasn't a member of the Committee and knew nothing about how Ramblers worked. So, for anyone in the future, if you see a vacancy on the Committee or we need a Chairman go for it. It is enjoyable and is necessary to keep the group going.

I plan to continue running the Working Party as well as attending Area Meetings and will give my full support and help to the incoming Chair when, and if, required.

TREASURER (Mike Aldridge)

Good afternoon to everyone here are the accounts for Sedgemoor Ramblers for the year 1 Oct 2016- 30 Sept 2017. These accounts have been prepared by myself and audited by Peter Levy to be true and accurate. I have also forwarded the accounts to Robin Downton the area treasurer.

You should have a page of summary of accounts of the groups income & expenditure for the year 2016/2017, and on the reverse a breakdown of our self-funded activities for the same financial year.

This last financial year has seen over £1300 come into our group funds from Central Office/donations/and from self-funded events like the walking festival and summer outing. But we have also paid out over £1,000

If we look at page 1 of the audited accounts, a couple of points we had £100 from Walking Partnership £20 from Sue Hazelwood, £20 from Ed and £60 from Jackie & Dave Morris from their trip to St Lucia this is called designated funds, we can use this money for group expenses. Alice kindly donated £10 she found in a car park when on a group walk, I understand a fingertip search of the car park was made but no other money was found.

Our general expenses are much on a par as last year

Our self-funded group activities I list separately to our main fund although they are in the same bank account. If you look on the reverse page of the summary of accounts it gives a breakdown of our income and expenses. Our Walking Festival which we held in June was a great success a big thank you to all the organisers /walk leaders and other helpers, and to those of you who turned up. Just to give you an idea of the cost to put on our 2 day Walking Festival I have given a breakdown. Thank you to those who made a donation and to the bakers of some truly scrumptious cakes without the selling of these we would not have made a small profit.

Please revert back to page 1 and our bank account summary. Our balance is £684.89 this includes £278.50 which is our self-funded pot, also in our main a/c we have £62.60 of designated funds (walking partnership funds) we have plans to buy some new tools for our footpath working party

Our net balance is £343.79 this figure is too high for Central Office guidelines and we need to reduce this. So next year I am accepting the basic allocation from Central Office this works out at £95 plus 0.98p per member which will give us £237. There are no major expenses planned for 2017/2018. Any Questions?

All in attendance agreed that the Accounts be adopted.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (Tina Ross)

As at 1 October 2017 there were 142 members (147 last year - fall of 3.4%)

Maximum membership during the period	148 April and May
Minimum membership during the period	142 January and September
Average for period Oct 16 - Sept 17	145
Average for same period Oct 15 to Sept 16	148

This reduction of 3.4% is slightly higher than that reported for the Ramblers as a whole (-1%), but is an improvement on the 6% decline for last year.

Looking at the Area Membership report for 1st June 2017 - Mendip and Woodspring are down 1%; Taunton Deane -4% and South Somerset -18%

On the other hand - according to the area figures - Sedgemoor and Somerset Young Walkers have increased their membership by 2%, Unaffiliated up by 13% and West Somerset by 15%.

During the 12 months:

There were 13 new members (7 new to Ramblers, 5 from other groups and 1 reinstated).

17 People left the group (5 left to go to other groups; 12 resigned entirely from Ramblers and 1 deceased). Five of those who resigned entirely from Ramblers had only been a member for one year. We were sad to report that 2 of our members died this year - Mr. W H Stoodley who had been a member for 23 years and Magda, who had been a member for 16 years.

Many of our members are non-walking members who support the work of Ramblers in their work in maintaining, improving and fighting for the access to the countryside which all walkers enjoy, whether or not they are members or affiliates of the Ramblers, our thanks to them as well as the walkers for their continued support.

SECRETARY (Jean Fincken)

This is the end of my first year as secretary and I have to admit Tony was right it wasn't as onerous as I had feared! It has been confusing at times while I get the hang of things but mainly it's been really interesting, seeing what goes on behind the scenes to get events like the walking festival up and running. My main tasks are to take the notes at meetings, check the Sedgemoor Ramblers emails and circulate information to the committee members and walkers by e-mail, hopefully no one feels that they are inundated with emails from me and, on the other hand, if anyone isn't receiving emails please let me have your email address and I'll add you to the circulation list.

I also receive information from Ramblers HQ from time to time and have just been told about laminated handouts they are producing for walk leaders and ICE (in case of emergency) cards for walkers. I have ordered some of each and will hand them out as soon as they arrive

FOOTPATH SECRETARY (Alan Chick)

Footpath Surveys

The group takes part in quarterly path surveys for the Sedgemoor Rights of Way (ROW) team who aim to have 10% of the footpath network surveyed each year. Over the year our group of volunteers have completed 114 footpaths surveys, 13 footpaths were reported as failures and numerous faults were encountered were reported. We have a small team of regular volunteers who complete the surveys but we are always happy to welcome more.

Footpath Faults

The footpath interactive map has been completely updated and is now very much easier to use being much more intuitive. The map enables anyone to report faults and track progress of any actions being taken. Ramblers' policy is to encourage individuals to report footpath faults, the map can be accessed from the Sedgemoor website and I would encourage everyone to use this facility to report faults. The process asks for your email so that they can send out updates on the repair of the fault.

Any Faults reported during the Ramblers Path Watch campaign in Somerset were forwarded to Footpath Secretaries in the first instance to assist the Rights Of Way (ROW) team in eliminating faults that would require no action.

A number of reported faults have been rectified throughout the year. There is an outstanding fault of a blocked path at Edington, which is not a ROW priority because the landowner is applying for a diversion although no application has appeared to date. There is also a policy to replace faulty stiles with gates where ever possible to improve accessibility, this does mean that repairs are not undertaken on the stiles but they join a replacement priority list.

Path Diversions/Deletions

A number of diversions have taken place this year none of which have been contentious, some purely administrative, some linked to planning permission and some for safety considerations. The biggest change has been in Cannington around the new road construction.

English Coast Path

The Sedgemoor section of the ECP is now in place. Ramblers' concerns regarding the path in the Brean Down area have been allayed. The main route has a section which is opened to walkers for only 3 months a year, due to nesting/migrating birds. For 9 months of the year walkers will use the Brean Way, a cycle way with good easy access for walkers including bird watching hides.

Brian Gilling asked if Alan was aware of the closure of a path near the Webbington Hotel. Alan said he was not, Tony said this could be reported on the website. Brian said that he thought Sedgemoor Council was already aware.

PROGRAMME SECRETARY (Edward Levy)

Each year I aim to fill the programme with a Sunday walk each week, 2 Saturday shorter walks each month and a weekly evening walk from mid-April until the end of August. The past year has seen that aim fulfilled. Our walks have mainly been in Somerset in our favoured areas of the Quantocks and the Mendips. We have done some walks further afield travelling into Devon, Dorset and Gloucestershire. Overall we have had a very varied programme providing the long harder walks for our core of tougher walkers and shorter and easier walks for our less demanding walkers. We have walked in many interesting and beautiful places and above all we have enjoyed ourselves.

We have a core of walk leaders who can be relied upon to submit a walk or walks for each programme. We have had some new leaders this year and could always do with more. We can help new leaders in planning, recceing and leading their walks so please, if you haven't led a walk and would like to try and speak to me or anyone on the committee and we will help you on your way.

We ran another successful walking festival in early June. We tried something a little different by offering some linear walks where transport was provided to the start. It was a very enjoyable weekend. The walking festival did require a great deal of organisation and the subcommittee formed to run it spent many hours putting it all together. Most cannot give that time each year so we have decided there will be no festival in 2018.

Our summer outing to Exeter and Dawlish proved to be the most successful since I started them in with the outing to Castle Drogo in July 2006. I was worried that I might not be able to fill a small coach seating 29 persons. However, that number was soon passed and I had to move to a larger coach, with a final total of 41 going on the trip.

In May Jenny organised a weekend in Dorset at Eype's Mouth Hotel near Bridport. The walks we did were included in our normal walking programme and some members, not on the holiday weekend, came down to Dorset and walked with us. We also attracted some local walkers from the Bridport area. Jenny's excellent planning and organisation resulted with everything running like clockwork, making it an exceptionally enjoyable weekend.

Eight members went on the holiday in June to walk the Causeway Coast Way in Northern Ireland. Most had not been to Ireland previously. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed their week and were surprised by the stunning beauty of the coast with surf washed golden beaches, high cliffs dotted with ruined castles, and of course the Giants Causeway which, was the highlight of the coast. We walked the entire Causeway Coast Way from Port Stewart to Ballycastle including the crossing of a rope bridge high above the ocean.

In September five of us took off to the Stubaital in the Austrian Tyrol. This proved to be a wonderful spot for a walking holiday. We walked in beautiful valleys, on high mountains, visited a giant glacier where some of us went into caves bored into the ice, and also took trips into Innsbruck where we visited the Olympic Ski-jump stadium and the old town. It was another very enjoyable holiday.

In the coming year I am hoping to run the walking programme on similar lines to the current year with weekly Sunday walks, twice monthly Saturday walks and weekly evening walks from mid-April to the end of August. I am planning another summer outing to take place in late June/early July. I have a destination in mind but need to do some research before finally deciding on it.

Finally I would like to thank all of the walk leaders who have led walks over the last year. They keep the group going year in year out.

SOCIAL SECRETARY (Jenny Fawle)

I have enjoyed arranging a variety of events and, together with events arranged by Edward, we have been able to offer the Group something most months during the year.

Christmas Dinner Party 2016 This was held for the first time at Combe House Hotel, Holford, a lovely hotel at the foot of the Quantocks, where we enjoyed good food, plenty of Christmas atmosphere and great company. It has been decided to hold our 2017 Christmas Dinner Party there again and the menu is now available. There will be a glass of mulled wine or fruit juice on arrival, followed by a 3-course meal. The cost is £26 and there are still places available.

Hosting Area AGM - February It was our turn to host this year's Area AGM and following a walk in the morning, it was back to St Mary's Church Centre, Nether Stowey and a Sedgemoor Ramblers welcome with tea and homemade cakes being served before and after the meeting.

Week-end walking in Dorset - May We enjoyed a sociable week-end in Dorset, with good weather, great walking and stunning coastal views. There were 11 of us staying at Eypes Mouth, near West Bay and we were pleased that some of our members joined us for the walks, as well as members of other groups. There were five lovely walks to choose from over the week-end and thanks to the other leaders - Tony, Sara & Alan and Edward for helping to make the week-end a success. How can those on the Saturday shorter walk forget those bluebells?

Walking Festival - June Our 2nd Festival, in conjunction with Stowey Walking, was again held in St Mary's Church Centre, Nether Stowey. We obtained a community grant from Sedgemoor District Council and a bus was provided to transport walkers to the start of the linear walks. Stowey Walking led 2 walks, one of which was dog-friendly and the other historical, inspired by Coleridge and we were joined again this year by visitors from Kent and Buckinghamshire. Tea and delicious homemade cakes, made and kindly donated by Sedgemoor Ramblers and Stowey Walking, were served in the afternoon. Many thanks to everyone who gave their help and support.

Although the festival was a huge success and enjoyed by everyone, it has been decided not to hold another one in 2018.

Summer Lunch - July Another enjoyable Summer Lunch was held, again at our house, following a short walk in the morning led by Tony. The weather was good and we were able to enjoy our lunch in the garden. My thanks to all those who gave their help and support by making delicious salads and desserts, serving on the day, clearing up and generally being on hand to share the workload.

Walking Treasure Hunt around Bridgwater - August This proved to be a fun evening to end our Summer evening walking programme, ending with a meal in The Great Escape, and the evening was greatly enjoyed by those taking part. The winning team (Pam, Edward and Sandra) were presented with their prize, a 'Party Treasure Chest' containing Pirate chocolate coins which they shared with everyone - it was a treasure hunt after all!

Finally, special thanks to Tony for his support over the years that I have been organising social events.

PUBLICITY SECRETARY

This position has been vacant this year

5 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following Officers agreed to stand for re-election:

Social Secretary - Jenny Fawle
Programme Secretary - Edward Levy
Membership Secretary - Tina Ross
Treasurer - Mike Aldridge
Secretary - Jean Fincken

It was agreed all Officers be re-elected en bloc.
Proposed by; Rhona Hall, Seconded by; Esme Gilling.

Edward Levy was elected to the position of Chairman.
Proposed by; Pam Wills, Seconded by; Sandra Matthews

The new chair then took over the meeting and proposed a vote of thanks to the outgoing chair; Tony Fawle

The following Officers were elected to the vacant posts:

Footpath Secretary - Hazel Boxer.
Proposed by; Sara Chick Seconded by; Jackie Morris.

Walking Members - Rhona Hall, Sandra Mathews, Jan Horn
Proposed by; Tony Fawle Seconded by; Alan Chick

The following post remains vacant:

Publicity Co-Ordination
Esme Gilling volunteered to provide an article for the Local Reach publication on a monthly basis.

6 GROUP HOLIDAYS 2018

Two Holidays are planned for next year;

Walking the Kerry Way June 2018 -

Possible w/c 2nd June. Flying from Bristol to Cork then hiring cars and renting a house so as to provide accommodation and breakfast then eating out in the evenings. The estimated cost (dependent on the number of travelers) is £325

Italian Dolomites September 2018 -

Based in Cortina, using a company called New Experiences. Flying from Bristol to Venice with a coach transfer to Cortina, half board accommodation and self-guided walking using routes provided by New Experiences.

Ed said that he had handouts with more details for anyone interested in either of these holidays.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) Jackie Morris said that she and Dave would be visiting Madelaine & Peter Thomas after the meeting and that Peter had been in poor health recently. She proposed that she convey the good wishes of the meeting to the couple. This was agreed.
- (ii) Mike Aldridge noted that it would be necessary to amend the joint signatories for the bank account replacing Tony Fawle with Edward Levy and that it is a requirement of Unity Bank that this change be recorded in the minutes of the AGM.
- (iii) Edward Levy reported that he is also arranging a Saturday walk in London on 10th March 2018. Transport will be by Berry's scheduled coach, pick up points at Bridgwater or North Petherdon (Jenny Fawle is booking this) There will be a walk through central London (including Buckingham Palace/ Trafalgar Square) and there will be a pub meal before the return coach journey. Discounted travel costs across London can be provided for groups of 10. A handout is available for anyone interested.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 14.20.