

SEDGEMOOR RAMBLERS

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in Berrow Village Hall, TA8 2NL, on

Saturday, 19th October 2019 at 13.30

PRESENT: Edward Levy (in the Chair & Programme Secretary), Mike Aldridge (Treasurer), Jenny Fawle (Social Secretary), Tina Ross (Membership Secretary), Hazel Boxer (Footpaths Secretary), Jean Fincken (Secretary), Sandra Matthew, Jan Horn & Rhona Hall (Ordinary Members), Tony Fawle (Working Party leader) Esmé Gilling, Brian Gilling, Pam Wills, Jackie Morris, Dave Morris, Andrea Sampson, Richard Barnes, Chris Preston, Anna Morris, Annabel Campbell, Jenny Ashley, Steve Bryant, Lyn Boden, Dave Shaw, Susan Shaw, Margaret Welch,

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Rose Callard, Judith Newberry, Jill Goodwin, Sue Hazelwood, Carole Baker, Karen & John Robinson

2 **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 20th October 2018:**

These were agreed and accepted as a true record. Proposer - Chris Preston Seconded - Rhona Hall

3 **MATTERS ARISING:**

There were no matters arising.

4 **OFFICERS' REPORTS:**

Chairman – Edward Levy

It doesn't seem a year since we were in this hall and I was reading out my report for 2018 and now here we are again one year later with my report for 2019.

We have continued to put on a full programme of walks which have been weekly on Sundays, twice monthly on Saturdays and evening walks weekly between late April and the end of August. Attendances on some of our walks during the summer months have been low and this has been a sore point with some leaders who have taken time and trouble to recce and put on a walk and then find only 2 or 3 turn up.

We have walked in our usual places mainly between the Mendips and the Quantocks and have gone further afield during the summer with a number of walks taking place on Exmoor.

We have had 3 holidays during the year. In May Jenny took us on a spring break to the Peak District. This was followed by a week in the Isle of Man in early June and a week in Eastbourne in early September where our walks were on the South Downs.

Our summer outing to Swanage was a great day out. The weather was kind to us and the 3 walks that we put on were enjoyed by the members who went on them.

Our summer lunch again took place at Manor Lodge Wembdon where Tony and Jenny were our hosts. The weather was kinder than in 2018 but the number attending was down. Jenny is stepping down as

social secretary so this was the last summer lunch organised by her. Hopefully if we appoint a new social secretary the event will continue in 2020.

Throughout the year our footpath working party has continued to repair stiles, fit new gates and clear the growth on over grown footpaths. The party is made up of just a small number of members and they would welcome anyone who is prepared to come along and assist.

Our committee has been active throughout the year and we have continued with our committee meetings on a quarterly basis. I would like to thank the committee members for the work that they have done which has contributed to the group running smoothly.

There will be a summer outing in late June or early July and I am in the early stages of organising holidays for 2020. I am hoping to arrange a week to Malta in late April/early May walking on the island of Gozo. I am also arranging a week in Guernsey either in early June or early September.

We do like to see you on our walks and the social events that we organise. Please try and come if you can. You will be very welcome.

Treasurer – Mike Aldridge

These are the accounts of our walking group Sedgemoor Ramblers for the year 1st October 2018 – 30th September 2019. They have been audited by Peter Levy as being true and accurate and I have forwarded the accounts to Area for consolidation before being passed to Central Office.

This past year has been fairly quiet re income and expenditure. We received £70 from the Walking Partnership (holidays booked through Ramblers) due to data protection they will not say who took these holidays but one lucky lady went to Trinidad & Tobago for which we received £30 and there was also £40 from another holiday, this may be from someone in this group who is not necessarily a walker. A big thank you to these people for stating Sedgemoor Ramblers as receivers of the donation.

Our current bank balances are:-

Main Account - £335.77 plus self-funding account - £153.30 = £489.07

This year we made a donation from our self-funded account of £150 towards the summer outing which helped to reduce the overall cost.

Next year my budget forecast will be on a par with this year, but our website costs will be zero now that we have changed to the new site. I propose to increase our spending on advertising to welcome new members over the next two years this will be funded from walking partnership designated funds.

Mike asked for any questions:-

Andrea Sampson asked what “self-funded funds” were & how they differed from other funds. Mike explained that the main funds come from allowances from HO (around £100 plus about £1.02 per person in the group) and other funds raised by Sedgemoor members ourselves via holidays, outings, social events make up the self-funded funds.

Tony Fawle queried the -£164 in the accounts and Mike explained that this was the £150 used for the summer outing spoken of earlier plus a smaller expenditure.

Tina Ross asked how we could welcome new members Mike said that this should be discussed at future committee meetings and suggested that printing more programmes for circulation or putting advertisements in local papers could be possibilities. There was a discussion on methods used in the past and the numbers and type of local publications. Mike said that HO ask how the funds from walking holidays is to be used. In the past this has been earmarked for tools for the working party and for the expenditure for the “Birthday Party” but with this years’ £70 he has allocated it to advertising.

Jenny asked if there was not a budget for advertising already Mike said yes and Ed said that we are currently working on the minimum budget and have only submitted a proposal for other funds for specific

projects.

Membership – Tina Ross

At the start of this financial year, the membership of this group stood at 142 and is now 133, a fall of 9 (6%). However, according to the statistics from Central Office, we have recruited 21 members and 22 have left. This compares with a national fall of 4%*. The overall recruitment shows that, with the exception of January, there has been a net loss of members nationally.

The following table shows a comparison with other groups in the Somerset area and nationally.

Comparison with our neighbour profiles and national profile:

Group	Members (start-end of year)	Average Age	Volunteers %	Gender profile m/f %	Use of email %
Nationally	102,486-101.746	65	8	43/55	41
Sedgemoor	142-133	69	11	37/62	47
Mendip	331-323	69	5	44/52	29
South Somerset	257-261	73	5	51/48	29
West Somerset	205-199	73	6	43/55	38
Taunton Deane	254-249	70	3	42/56	33
Woodspring	189-202	69	7	42/57	51
Som. Young Walkers	36-0	45	-	-	-

HQ have recognised for some time that there has been a recruitment issue and have done a major exercise in analysis. Lately, they have focussed on a social media campaign and they appear to think that this is being successful. On the home front, thanks to Esme, we do get members who have read about us on Reach. Others have found us on the internet by doing a search (for walking groups). Others have been recruited as friends of existing walkers. The Committee continues to look for ideas which will improve our numbers.

*(My calculations)

Tina added that she was glad to hear in Mike's report that was ow funding for local recruitment but thought that the problem is a national one and hopefully Ramblers will address this nationally. She added that steps should be taken to research how to attract people of our age group who generally do not communicate via Facebook & Twitter. However as the Young walkers group has folded it is not just our age groups issue, Also we need to attract people from Taunton and Bridgwater areas.

Sandra Matthews asked if there were "Local Reach" type publication in other areas

Jan Horn said in Mark there was only the parish magazine

Jenny Fawle said there were around 50 different parishes in our area.

Esme Gilling said that she had tried to get an insert in the Burnham Local Reach as often as possible but sometimes there wasn't a suitable local walk or the walk submitted didn't get printed. She had tried to add shorted walks to attract new people but had found that when she had submitted a longer walk there had been visitors to that walk.

Edward said that he'd been successful in getting an article into the Hinkley Point employees magazine and

there had been two visitors from Hinkley on recent walks but these were now as a direct result of the article.

Jenny Fawle said that there were lots of walking websites for different groups and we need to ensure we have a good presence on the internet.

Hazel Boxer asked what constituted a "volunteer" in Tina's report and was told that this was anyone with a role e.g. committee members or walk leaders

Secretary – Jean Fincken

This has been my third year as Secretary and every so often I begin to think that I know what I am doing, which is mainly taking notes at meetings & arranging the circulation of same. Also I check the Sedgemoor email and can circulate info to you all by email from time to time so if any walk leader has changes to their forthcoming walks let me know and I can pass the changes on to you all & ask Mike Tompsett (our website guru) to add a "news flash" to the website as well.

The main changes to the role this year has been the circulation of the officers reports prior to the committee meetings which has been a success as it allow more time for discussion during the meeting rather than listening to officers' reading out their reports. The notes /minutes from these committee meetings are now available on the new Sedgemoor website for anyone to see. So please have a look so you know what we are doing and feel free to contact me if you want to comment on any issues discussed or if you wish to raise any issues for future meetings.

Footpaths – Hazel Boxer

This year we had 116 footpaths to check (37 more than last year). (93 passed, 18 failed and 5 part passed. This took a total of 346 volunteer hours, that includes the admin and walking the path. We also had 12 diversions to check out, 7 have been confirmed, 4 are pending and 1 is under appeal.

We also had an extra task - to check out the Parrett Trail for SCC from the point of view of people who don't do much, or any footpath walking. This took 34 volunteer hours.

Tina and I attended the area footpath secretaries meeting, chaired by Carl Earl. 11 people present. The Area Committee are passionate about the path network, so much work goes on ensuring that paths are monitored.

The footpath checking team consists of Ed, Mike, Jean, Rhona, Sandra, Karen and John, Don and Ang. Also Jan and Maribel accompany sometimes. Tina and I would like to thank everyone for their constant enthusiasm and efficiency in tackling the paths.

Working Party- Tony Fawle

This year to date we have completed 9 working parties involving path clearance, repairing stiles and discovering antique stiles! This was at the pathway to Brymore School where we uncovered a Victorian iron kissing gate. Parishes worked in Sedgemoor were Chapel Allerton, Bawdrip, Cossington, Cannington, Enmore, Othry and Holford. We also reorganised the Council's storage depot at Stowey Rocks.

Thanks to our dedicated WP Team for their help, as without these folks we would not be able to run a working party. These are the 3 Aldridge brothers John, Don & Mike, Richard Barnes and Richard Lovelace.

Jake Taylor from SCC who I coordinate the work with has been excellent but is now leaving the Council so we look forward to working with a new person when appointed.

If anyone would like to be involved with the working party, or you know anyone who you think would enjoy a half day a month (they do not have to be a member of Ramblers), then let me know. The work is

enjoyable, fun and rewarding. We meet every 3rd Wednesday of the month.

Tony added that on the latest working party there had been two amusing incidents, one when an overloaded wheelbarrow tipped over narrowly missing Richard and a tale of a missing flask that was eventually found in someone else's backpack complete with a banana skin – the working party is now considering calling themselves after “The last of the Summer Wine” characters.

Programme – Edward Levy

We have had another good year of walking. Our walking programme has run well throughout the last year. We have kept to our usual basis of a weekly Sunday walk, twice monthly Saturday walks and weekly evening walks in the period late April to the end of August.

Whilst we have kept with our normal programme attendances on walks have been down especially on some of our Sunday walks. Some of our leaders have expressed concern that so few are turning up on their walks and have questioned whether they should continue to take the time and trouble of recceing and preparing walks when so few turn up. Hopefully this can be turned around but we do appear to have a diminishing number of members who prefer the traditional long Sunday walks. More are opting to go on our shorter Saturday walks. We originally introduced Saturday walks as a stepping stone from our short evening walks to our longer Sunday walks. However, we appear to have created 2 groups of walkers, those who prefer shorter Saturday walks and those who prefer longer Sunday walks. There are very few of us who undertake both.

In late June we had our annual summer outing. The 2019 trip was to Corfe Castle and Swanage and offered our usual mix of a short, medium and long walks. We were lucky having a perfect summer day for the trip which was enjoyed by all.

We have had some good holidays during the year. Our Spring break in May to the Peak District was well patronized and we took over Gradbach Mill for the period of our break. The Mill proved to be a very good find and everyone enjoyed their stay and the walks that were on offer.

In early June 11 members went on a week's holiday to the Isle of Man. The holiday was based in Douglas, the island capital and centre of the transport network. We made use of buses, steam and electric trains to get to and from our walks and managed to walk in most parts of the island. The island was very scenic and our walks enabled us to see quite a bit of it.

In early September a small group of 8 travelled to Sussex for a week in Eastbourne which was our base for walks on the South Downs. We made use of the frequent buses over the Downs to get to and from our walks which took us over a lot of the area between Eastbourne, Newhaven and Lewes. The wide rolling Downs and high white chalk cliff tops was a great place to walk and quite a contrast to our local walking in Somerset.

In the coming year I intend to continue with our usual walks i.e. weekly on Sundays, twice monthly on Saturdays and weekly in the evenings between late April and the end of August. I am currently preparing our next walking programme running from 1st December to 31st March. Walks for the programme have been particularly slow in coming in and I still have 3 Sundays and 2 Saturdays to fill. So if any of you here can help to fill those gaps it would be much appreciated.

There will be another summer outing either at the end of June or in early July. I haven't come up with a destination at present. Having organised this event since 2006 I am running out of ideas of where to go,

so if any of you can come up with suggestions they would be appreciated.

I am also in the early stages of organising 2 holidays. The first will be in either late April or early May and will be to Malta for a week walking on the island of Gozo. The second will be in either early June or early September and will be to Guernsey for a week of walking there. I will be emailing members in the next few days with further details and requesting those interested to register their names with me.

Please do continue to come out on our walks and to put walks into the programme. The walking programme is only as good as the walks put in by the members. If you don't put walks in we don't have a programme. New walk leaders are always welcome and if you haven't led a walk please think about doing so. There is plenty of help on hand just speak to me or any of the committee members.

Edward added that he had brought some handouts about the 2020 holidays for those interested and would email copies shortly.

Social – Jenny Fawle

Christmas Dinner Party 2018: This was held at Enmore Park Golf Club, a lovely venue which had recently been refurbished, and 37 members of Sedgemoor Ramblers and guests attended. Tony was able to arrange a member's discount of 15% on bottles of wine to accompany the meal and this was much appreciated. It was decided to hold the Christmas 2019 Christmas Dinner there and we are looking forward to another enjoyable evening. The menu is now available and I am taking bookings.

New Year's Day Walk 2019: Tony and I have led a New Year's Day walk for the last few years with mulled wine at 'coffee time' to celebrate the New Year. We have enjoyed a Bubbly and Mince Pie walk, led by Edward, for a number of years and these festive walks are appreciated and enjoyed by those attending. These will be taking place again this Christmas and New Year, details in the December to April programme.

Peak District Holiday – May 2019. I organised a 4-night break in the Peak District in May and with the help of Tony, Edward and Alan & Sara we were able to offer the group of 22 a choice of 2 walks each day (3 on some days) as well as a short walk on the day of arrival, all enjoyed in warm and sunny weather. Gradbach Mill proved to be the perfect place to stay in a stunning location, with very comfortable accommodation, a relaxed atmosphere and good food to enjoy at the end of a day's walking.

Summer Lunch: This was held in July. The weather was hot and sunny so following a short walk in the morning led by Tony, we were able to eat lunch in the garden. Numbers were down from previous years, but nevertheless we had an enjoyable day. Thanks, as always, go to those who supported this social event and special thanks to those who made delicious dishes for us all to enjoy and helped on the day.

Bickleigh Castle, near Tiverton: Following the success of a visit to Cothelstone Manor a few years ago, I arranged a day out to Bickleigh Castle for a group of 15 in August. Following a walk in the morning, it was back to eat our packed lunches in the lovely gardens before the tour. We found the history of the castle fascinating and enjoyed hearing about the people who once lived there. Tea and cake in the Orangery ended a very enjoyable day at the Castle, then on to Bickleigh Mill nearby for a bit of shopping before heading for home.

Other Social events: Edward has organised two holidays this year, a Summer Outing and a day walking

in and around Plymouth which he will cover in his report.

Finally, having been a member of the Committee for 13 years, initially joining as a Walking Member then taking on Publicity Officer and Social Secretary roles, I have decided to resign at this AGM. I have enjoyed the extra involvement as a member of the Committee and hope that these roles will be filled so that the group can thrive and we can continue to enjoy social events in the future.

At the end of Jenny's reports she was presented with a bouquet by Edward as a token of all the years of service to our social calendar. Jenny responded that she was "speechless".

Publicity

Post Vacant

5 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Edward stated that some serving members of the committee were willing to stand again;

Edward Levy as Chairman & Programme Secretary

Mike Aldridge as Treasurer

Hazel Boxer as Footpath Secretary together with Tina Ross

Jean Fincken as Secretary

and Sandra Matthews as Walking Member

and asked if it was acceptable to deal with these posts as a whole.

This was unanimously agreed.

Edward said that Rhona Hall was willing to take on the role of Membership Secretary if acceptable. This was proposed by Jan Horn & Seconded by Jean Fincken

Edward asked if anyone wished to take on the Social Secretary post. There were no takers

Edward asked if anyone wished to take on the Publicity post. There were no takers.

Edward asked if anyone wished to take on the a Walking member role. There were no takers.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other issues raised.

Meeting closed 14:20