

SEDGEMOOR RAMBLERS

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held By Zoom Meeting on

Saturday, 21st November 2020 at 14.00

PRESENT: Edward Levy (in the Chair & Programme Secretary), Mike Aldridge (Treasurer), Rhona Hall (Membership Secretary), Hazel Boxer, Tina Ross (Footpaths Secretaries), Jean Fincken (Secretary), Sandra Mathews (Ordinary Member), Sue Hazelwood, Maribel Hamilton.

- 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Rose Callard, Pam Wills, Jenny & Tony Fawle, Chris Preston, Anna Morris, Margaret Welch
- 2 **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 19th October 2019:**
These were agreed and accepted as a true record.
Proposer – Mike Aldridge, Seconded – Hazel Boxer
- 3 **MATTERS ARISING:**
There were no matters arising.
- 4 **OFFICERS' REPORTS:**
Due to the nature of this meeting the officers' reports had been circulated to all before the meeting and so were not read out. The chair asked for proposer and second for the content of these reports
Proposer – Sandra Mathews, Seconded – Rhona Hall

Chairman – Edward Levy

What a difference a year has made. At last year's AGM we were confidently looking forward to the coming year and had several events planned. We started well and had our Christmas and New Year events as usual. The winter was very wet, and we then had the cancellation of some of our walks especially in February and early March when paths on some of the programmed walks became impassable.

Coronavirus then arrived and brought everything to a standstill from mid-March to mid-August apart from footpath surveys where we were able to carry out the June allocation. We managed to get our walking programme running again from mid-August and hopefully will be able to keep it going over the coming months.

Outdoor physical activity is exempt from coronavirus restrictions affecting medium, high, and very high tiers. Ramblers group walks are also exempt from the "rule of six" in accordance with [UK Government guidance](#). These are exempt from the latest restrictions, as we have already met the protocols, and put extra measures in place to reduce the risks of COVID-19.

Our footpath working party re-started on 28th October after having the planned restart on 21st October cancelled due to heavy rain.

Normally I would be announcing events scheduled for the coming year at this meeting. However, until Covid-19 has left us it is not possible to make any plans. We may be able to run some of our annual events and if so, you will hear about them in our waking programme and on our website.

On a more optimistic note coronavirus has resulted in many more people going out into the countryside walking. Hopefully, this will lead to a love of walking amongst them and some of these new walkers joining local Ramblers' groups.

Treasurer – Mike Aldridge

A warm welcome to you on this our first and hopefully only AGM on Zoom.

This past year has been something that none of us could ever have imagined with so many restrictions that have changed our daily lives which we always took for granted. Let's hope that 2021 will be a better year for all of us and our families.

These are the accounts for our walking group Sedgemoor Ramblers for the year 1st October 2019 to 30th September 2020. They have been audited by Peter Levy as being true and accurate.

A very quiet year on the finance side for Sedgemoor Ramblers due to the restrictions imposed and many walks and the Summer outing cancelled.

Income for the year has been the basic allocation from Central Office. We also received £80 in total from the Walking Partnership. £40 from Dave and Jacki Morris and £40 from Hazel and Richard. A message to all of us when out walking to take care and watch your step. Even the most experienced of us can take a tumble but the recovery may take a while.

A big thank you to those people for stating Sedgemoor Ramblers as receivers of the donation when booking with Ramblers Holidays (walking partnership).

Our current balances are main fund £487.84 + self-funded £216.51 = £704.35.

The balance has increased over the year, we spent less on printing and postage, nothing on web-site costs because we are now under the Ramblers web-site and the surplus from the previous year's Summer Outing and summer lunch was banked in this year's accounts.

Next year-who knows? Let's hope things have improved with Covid 19. I have asked Central Office to give us the minimum allowance because our bank balance is rather high. Our expenditure for 2020/2021 will depend on Covid 19. The summer outing and summer lunch we can make a donation from our self-funded account. We can also increase our publicity costs.

Membership – Rhona Hall

Our membership over the past year has increased slightly from 133 to 138, although with some turnover during the year. We have welcomed 21 new members over that period, which is good news, but at the same time have lost 16. Quite a few of the losses are due to age or health issues and we would like to pass on our good wishes to all our former members. It is not clear whether the increase in membership is due to Ramblers publicity or to people who want to get outside more after the trials and tribulations of lockdown etc. Hopefully, a return to a more normal walking programme over time will help to ensure that we retain these members.

As in previous years I have set out below a table of our neighbour and national profiles. I would add a proviso here that these figures are taken from the current membership dashboard which does not always agree with the figures reported from 12 months ago. I believe any discrepancies to be due to the way that central office compiles the figures rather than any errors. The eagle eyed among you will note that the gender split does not always add up to 100 as some members have not stated this information.

Group	Membership (start-end of year)	Average Age	Volunteer %	Gender profile m/f%
National	101,746-98,717	66	13%	43/46
Sedgemoor	133-138	70	22%	35/63
Mendip	323-332	70	18%	45/51
South Somerset	261-228	74	8%	51/49
West Somerset	199-179	74	27%	42/56
Taunton Deane	249-249	71	9%	42/56
Woodspring	202-208	70	13%	43/57

The above does make very clear that the overall membership is ageing and if anyone has any suggestions for attracting younger members we would be very pleased to hear them.

Secretary – Jean Fincken

I have very little to report in this strange year with walks and meetings having been impossible for the greater part of the year. Our committee meetings have continued via Zoom, and more recently in person when there are only 6 of us attending and so the agendas and notes have been quite sparse. However all notes from committee meetings are still being uploaded to the Sedgemoor website for anyone to view should they wish to know what goes on at the meetings. Also anyone wishing to add an item to the committee meetings for discussion can do so by contacting me direct or via the Sedgemoor gmail email account.

My other duties are to keep a watch on the Sedgemoor email, which has mainly consisted of queries about footpath this year and to arrange the AGM which was to have been at Woolavington Village Hall for a change this year – I'm hoping I will be able to resurrect that booking for 2021 and look forward to seeing many of you there.

Footpaths – Hazel Boxer

The footpath team completed checks in November 2019, February 2020, May checks were cancelled because of Corona virus but then we were allowed out in June, completed the checks and before we knew it we had August 2020 checks. As ever the team did a sterling job in rain, wind and the occasional shine.

In total 118 paths were checked, with 95 passes, 16 fails and 7 part passes, taking 244.5 hours.

Thank you to everybody in the team for their enthusiasm which helps Tina and myself along.

Working Party- Tony Fawle

Since last year's AGM we have only been able to work on 4 occasions due to Covid restrictions.

Worked involved was a bridge repair at Wembdon.

Woolavington Path clearance involving 2 paths.

Puriton path clearance and installing a metal marlow gate

Wembdon Repairing and securing 5 Finger Posts and installation of 1 new post as well as clearing around 5 kissing gates.

Thanks to our team of workers Richard Barnes, Mike Aldridge, John Aldridge, Don Aldridge, Richard Loveless and Mike Zobell.

Special thanks to Mike Zobell who has now left the area and had been involved with our WP for 20 years. Also Don Aldridge who has also left the area.

I have managed to recruit Stephen Fry from Catcot to our working party which will be a great help. Although not a Ramblers member he is keen to help.

Somerset County Council Rights of way have appointed Martin Cooper who took over from Jake Taylor in October 2019.

Programme – Edward Levy

We started the year in October in all good spirits with the intention of running our weekly walking programme and our normal annual events.

We started off well but as we headed towards the end of January and into February the very wet winter weather started to have effect on our programmed walks. Some of the walks programmed became impossible to walk because of flooded or excessively muddy paths and there were some cancellations. This was all taken in our stride and accepted as something that can happen when the weather takes a turn for the worse.

If flooded and muddy paths had been our only problem we would have got by OK. However, the arrival of coronavirus in mid-March put paid to that and our walking programme which at that time had been prepared to 31st July had to be cancelled as did the holiday to Guernsey and the summer outing to Abergavenny.

Permission was given to start running group walks again from early July. That permission was limited to groups of 6 and the feeling was that until larger groups were permitted, we would not resume our walking programme. Permission for group walks with up to 30 was given in August and we managed to restart our walking programme from 15th August. Many members were not ready to start walking with a group and initially attendances were very low. As we have progressed through September and October attendances have increased with as many as 14 on a recent walk. Our walks must comply with coronavirus protocols which makes handling large numbers of walkers difficult. In view of this our walks are being restricted to a maximum of 15 and a pre-registration system has been put in place.

The walking programme is being temporarily issued monthly which gives us more flexibility and makes it easier to cater for further restrictions that may once again stop group walks. Walks for the monthly programme have been coming in slowly. At present the number of walks booked for the months of December, January, February, and March are very low. So I would ask if you are able to lead a walk and help keep the programme running please do so. It doesn't matter if it is a walk you have led before.

It is probable that coronavirus restrictions are going to apply for several more months so making plans for our annual events in the coming year are not possible at present. It is possible that we may be able to run a summer outing and a group holiday in September 2021. Please watch forthcoming walk programmes for announcements.

One thing we should do when all coronavirus restrictions have ceased is to have a celebratory walk where attendance is unlimited and where there will be plenty of eats and drinks on the way. Let's hope it will come about in the not too distant future.

Social

Post Vacant

Publicity

Post Vacant

Accounts

Edward asked for the accounts to be proposed and seconded

Proposer – Jean Fincken, Seconded – Sue Hazelwood

5 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

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

Edward Levy as Chairman & Programme Secretary

Mike Aldridge as Treasurer

Hazel Boxer with Tina Ross as Footpath Secretaries

Rhona Hall as Membership Secretary

Jean Fincken as Secretary

Sandra Matthews as Walking Member

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

This was proposed by Sue Hazelwood & Seconded by Maribel Hamilton

Edward said that there had been no interest shown in any of the vacant posts (Social Secretary / Publicity post / Walking member) and so the committee would continue in its present format.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Carl Earl - Deceased Memorial Sedgemoor, Group contribution – Edward Levy

Ed reported that Carl had been the Area Footpath Secretary for many years until his sudden death.

The Area chair had suggested that each area contribute to a memorial and suggested £25 from funds & £25 from self-funded funds in line with the other groups. Hazel said that Carl had been of great help to her and Tina and that Les Stather was taking on the role at present. Proposer – Rhona Hall, Seconded – Sandra Mathews

- Book of Mendip Walks - Jean Fincken

Jean reported that Norman Beyer had sent her information on some new walk books by Sue Gearing and Les Davies recently published and said if anyone was interested in these to contact her and she would forwards the information/ booking form.

- Use of current Funds – Mike Aldridge

Mike asked, given the lack of events & walking this year, what we should do with the currently held funds. Ed suggested that once life returns to normal that some could be used towards an event or outing. Sandra asked if it would be permissible to make a donation to a charity. Sue Hazelwood said this may be difficult (from her experience with the WI) but a similar walking based charity should be possible

A discussion followed and it was decided that this matter should be raised as an agenda item on forthcoming committee meetings.

Meeting closed 14:25