

SEDGEMOOR RAMBLERS

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in Woolavington Village Hall on

Saturday, 23rd October 2021 at 13.30

PRESENT: Edward Levy (in the Chair & Programme Secretary), Mike Aldridge (Treasurer), Tina Ross (Footpaths Secretary), Hazel Boxer (Footpaths Secretary), Jean Fincken (Secretary), Sandra Mathews (Ordinary Member), Tony Fawle (Working Party leader) Jenny Fawle, Esmé Gilling, Brian Gilling, Pam Wills, Andrea Sampson, Richard Barnes, Carole Baker, Chris Preston, Anna Morris, Annabel Campbell, Dave Shaw, Susan Shaw, Helen Young, Paul Machin, Sandy Machin, Rose Callard, Linda Hay, Maribel Hamilton, Sharon Perry, John Perry, Sam Winter (28)

- 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Rhona Hall (Membership Secretary), Peter Wallis, Dee Wallis
- 2 **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD (via Zoom) ON 21st November 2020:**
These were agreed and accepted as a true record; Proposer – Sandra Mathews
Seconded – Mike Aldridge
- 3 **MATTERS ARISING:**
There were no matters arising.
- 4 **OFFICERS' REPORTS:**

Chairman – Edward Levy

Last year we conducted our AGM via “Zoom” which served its purpose but not quite the same as having our normal open meeting. So, this year it is nice to be back in a hall and seeing everyone in person.

This last year has been a year of recovery following being put completely out of action during the pandemic for long periods in the previous year. One of the things we did manage to continue doing during lockdowns was our footpath surveys for Somerset County Council. We were permitted to go out into the countryside to do these either on our own with one other. Our other activities have been spasmodic with complete stoppage during the November 2020 and January - March 2021 lockdowns. Since April we have got our walking programme and our footpath working party up and running again. Other annual activities such as summer outing, summer lunch, summer holiday and Christmas meals have been put on hold. We hope to revive these in 2022.

Lockdown got a lot of people walking and national membership has been increasing in the last few months. Sedgemoor group hasn't seen many of these new members and our total membership has remained fairly constant with the average age of our members continuing to rise. Hopefully some of the new walkers brought about by the pandemic will join our group and help bolster our numbers. New members are always welcome especially those who participate in the group's activities. We do need them to get interested in the group, become involved and take on some of our volunteer roles.

I would like to thank our committee members and for their hard work throughout the year. Their work has kept the group running through this difficult year and has helped to ensure that our members have been able to continue experiencing the joys of walking.

Hazel and Tina who have been joint footpath secretaries over the last 5 years are standing down and I would like to thank them for all the work they have done over their term of office.

With the restrictions of the pandemic having now receded we can look forward to the future and a year of normal activities. I hope you all continue to enjoy rambling with us.

Treasurer – Mike Aldridge

Welcome to our AGM here are the accounts for the year 1st October 2020 to 30th September 2021. These have been audited by Peter Levy as being true and accurate. Last year's AGM was held on Zoom so it is nice to see everyone again.

You will see the accounts return several gaps as compared to previous years which shows how quiet things have been.

From the top-

We continue to receive funds from Area at .95p per group plus £1.01p per member, yes we do have a lot of members, lots who no longer walk but continue to pay their subs to the walking movement.

Bank deposit interest, you will see we are at the end of free banking and are now charged for every cheque or cash we deposit.

On the receipts section the £32 was a refund from last years cancelled AGM hall booking.

On payments £60.78 is the cost of today's AGM plus last year's Zoom costs.

Our Audit fee is to Peter Levy for the accounts I reward him with bottles of wine rather than cash. Peter is happy with this and it depends what is on offer at Morrisons.

Printing and postage is low compared to our normal amount as shown in 2019. A reduced amount of printing programmes due to Covid and limited walks.

The miscellaneous item of £50 was a branch donation towards a commemorate bench for Carl Earl. He was the area footpath officer and campaigner for the ramblers for many years. His knowledge of the area and the footpaths was amazing. Carl Passed away early this year.

The group also gave Pam some flowers for her special Birthday we understand she thought they were beautiful. Pam if you want to know how much we spent you will have to come back next year because it will show on next year's accounts.

Our overall balance is £809.66

I split this into 2 areas

Our main fund from area, donations and legacies is £643.15

Our self-funded a/c profits from summer outing/lunch/festival £166.51

Our main account of £643.15 is on the high side due to the last 2 years of limited expenditure. I have decided not to accept the funding from area for 2021/2022.

This will reduce our overall balance I will review our account in 2022 before our budget request is put forward.

Any questions on my report?

Let's hope next year will be a little bit busier.

Pam Willis thanked everyone for the flowers and many cards she had received, she said that the flowers had been beautiful and had lasted from her birthday in mid-September until last week

Sam Winter asked if rather than not accepting the funding for next year it should be accepted and used for a project such as footpath maintenance. Mike Aldridge responded that he had discussed this with the Area representative and any monies required for such projects could be drawn down easily and quickly when /if needed.

Annabel Campbell asked if walk leaders had any insurance Edward Levy aid that they had under the umbrella of the Ramblers

Andrea Sampson stated that the Post Office was currently accepting cheques from all major banks for deposit without charges.

Membership – Rhona Hall (read out by Jean Fincken in Rhona's absence)

This time last year our membership was 138. It is now 134 made up of 130 full members and four affiliates. We have gained 16 members since my last AGM report, meaning that we have lost 20. In their wisdom Ramblers have restricted the information available on the dashboard to changes made after July 2021, so I am unable to do a full analysis of who has left!

As in previous years I have set out below a table of our neighbour and national profiles, though again I can only access headline figures with no analysis. Overall local membership has increased slightly, but with a small decrease for us and West Somerset. We remain the smallest group in the area. The dashboard no longer shows average age, so I have deleted this column, but it does show an age breakdown in 10-year bands from which it is clear that all groups have a majority in the 70-79 band.

Group	Membership (start-end of year)	Volunteer %	Gender profile m/f%
National	98,717 – 101,130	14%	45/55
Sedgemoor	138 - 134	22%	36/61
Mendip	332 - 352	20%	44/51
South Somerset	228 - 231	14%	49/51
West Somerset	179 - 170	26%	41/57
Taunton Deane	249 - 253	16%	42/57
Woodspring	208 - 222	14%	44/56

Although this breakdown has always been provided for the AGM, I am unsure of its usefulness or relevance, so would appreciate feedback on whether members would like me to continue to provide this in future.

Hazel Boxer said that she was in favour of the breakdown being reported.

Edward Levy stated that he had been able to determine that the average age of members in this area was 71

Secretary – Jean Fincken

Again there is little report in yet another “strange” year but hopefully 2022 will prove to be more like the “good old days”. With many of the committee meetings having been carried out on Zoom my tasks have been much reduced and apart from some short committee notes (all available on the web site if you would like to read them) I have only to check the Sedgemoor email routinely and that too has been rather quiet although in recent weeks there have been a few enquiries from new members that hopefully will turn into new walking friends over the coming weeks. My only other duty has been to book today’s venue & serve the refreshments at the end, (so there may be a small delay between the end of meeting and first cuppa being poured!!)

Footpaths – Hazel Boxer & Tina Ross

The statistics are that we surveyed 105 paths, 17 bridleways and 8 restricted byways taking 310 hours. 101 passed, 21 failed and 8 part passed.

We were able to continue during the pandemic because Martin Cooper (Rights of Way Volunteer and Trails Officer) gave us individually named letters stating that we were essential workers.

We had a training morning with Martin at Wedmore on 8.6.21 walking a footpath with him. We learnt that he would like to change our ways a little, less detail and everything noted on the map, not written up on individual sheets, because he lacks the manpower to enter on to the website all the info that we have been providing. I think we will have to refer to the Ease of use survey conditions more often until we get used to them.

Tina and I would like to thank everyone in the footpath team for their hard work and enthusiasm. I hope that everyone enjoys checking footpaths as much as we do.

Working Party- Tony Fawle

Since last year’s AGM we have only been able to work on 6 occasions due to Corvid restrictions.

Worked involved commenced in May

May - Chapel Allerton- Path Clearance

June - North Petherton- Path Clearance completely blocked

July - Fiddington -path clearance and 3 Finger Post placed

Aug - Bawdrip -2 paths cleared one which was blocked completely

Sept - Burnham – Path clearance severely cut back and almost blocked

Oct - Highbridge- Path clearance

This year I have recruited 2 new volunteers. Neil Anderson (non-Member) and John Perry (Member). With the team standing at 6 going forward we should have enough to maintain a working party. Thanks to Richard, Mike and myself for their work!

Sadly, we lost Richard Loveless who passed away in April. Richard was a retired teacher and a true gentleman who was always willing to volunteer.

The working party has a good relationship with Martin Cooper and the Area Wardens. Neil Anderson is to be given training to be a strimmer operator.

Programme – Edward Levy

It has been a difficult year with lockdown in November followed by the 3-month lockdown from January to March stopping our walking. The walking programme had restarted in August 2020 being issued on a monthly basis. The November 2021 programme had been prepared and issued to members and then had to be cancelled. We got going again in December and managed a few walks before having to close again after Christmas. We got going again from mid-April issuing a monthly programme up until the end of July. Since July we have got back to our 4-monthly programme and hopefully we will be able to continue with it over the coming year

Ramblers central office kept us up to date with what we could and could not do. We had periods when groups of no more than 6 could meet and walk and decided it was not worthwhile organising walks for such a small number. Later walking became classified as an organised outdoor sporting activity which allowed groups of up to 30 to meet. We decided to limit groups to no more than 12 and a booking system had to be introduced to cater for this. When restrictions were eased further from mid-May and any group of up to 30 could meet we dropped the pre-walk booking as our walks do not attract as many as 30 walkers.

During the pandemic a lot of members continued to walk forming small groups amongst friends. Some discovered they prefer these small groups and have been reluctant to return to organised Ramblers walks with larger numbers. Consequently, many of our walks have had poor attendances. Our weekly Sunday walks which have been the mainstay of our walking programme have seen very poor turnouts with just a core of regular walkers turning up. Our Saturday and summer evening walks have fared a little better, but numbers are down from pre-pandemic levels.

Filling the walking programme to cover weekly Sunday, twice monthly Saturday and weekly evening walks has proven difficult. The current programme running to the end of November reflects this showing some dates unfilled. The following programme covering the period 1st December to 31st March is currently in the course of preparation. This programme is looking a little better in so far as most Sundays have been filled with the exception of January. Saturday walks however show only 3 of 8 dates taken so far.

The pandemic brought a halt to annual events of summer outing, summer buffet, Christmas meal and summer holidays. These are all likely to be back on the agenda for 2022. I am already in the process of organising a holiday to North Wales in June and it is likely that our summer outing to the Abergavenny area cancelled in 2020 will be revived for 2022.

The holiday has been opened to those who were to have been on the cancelled one and 10 places have been filled. Although there are 2 more places available currently the hotel have no more spaces and are running a waiting list.

After many years as programme secretary I am standing down at this meeting. I feel it is time for a change and for

someone with new and fresh ideas to take on the role. I will of course continue to walk with the group so will be seeing you when doing so.

Social – Vacant Post

Publicity - Vacant Post

5 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

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

Mike Aldridge as **Treasurer**

Rhona Hall as **Membership Secretary**

Jean Fincken as **Secretary**

Sandra Mathews as **Walking Member**

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

This was proposed by Tina Ross and seconded by Andrea Sampson

Chairman

Edward Levy asked if anyone wished to take on the role of Chairman. There were no takers so he agreed to stand for one more year.

Proposed by Andrea Sampson and seconded by Jean Fincken

Edward Levy stated that this would be his last year in post.

Programme Secretary

Esme Gilling and Sandra Mathews -This leaves a 2nd Walking Member post vacant

Proposed by Tony Fawle and seconded by Chris Preston

Footpath Secretary

Sam Winter

Proposed by Hazel Boxer and seconded by Tina Ross

Edward asked if anyone wished to take on the posts of Social Secretary, Publicity Secretary and Walking Member (2 posts). Helen Young asked for more information on the duties of a walking member and Edward Levy said it was to attend the quarterly committee meetings with a view to taking on a role in future years. Sharon Perry asked if roles such as Social secretary could be shared and Edward Levy said this was possible. Jenny Fawle said that she had been Publicity Secretary for seven years and that it was not an onerous task with much of the duties being able to be done from home at the person's discretion.

Social Secretary

Sharon Perry and Helen Young

Proposed by Tony Fawle and seconded by Sandra Mathews

Pubicity Secretary

Remains Vacant

Walking Members

Paul Machin

Proposed by Chris Preston and seconded by Tony Fawle

Sandy Machin

Proposed by Helen Young and seconded by Tina Ross

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Maribel Hamilton said that she wishes to say “Goodbye” to everyone as she was returning to Spain to live.

(b) Edward Levy said that was planning another holiday to Llandudno for a week from 1st June 2022

(c) Mike Aldridge said that the “Order of the Boot” was normally presented annually at the Xmas meal but had not been for the last two years and explained for new members that this is an award to one member of the group for achievements such as “Wettest Walk”, “Muddiest Walk” or “Which Way Wally” in honour of one member who always turned left if in doubt leading to some short walks!!

It had been decided that the award would continue to be given and that last year’s inscription had gone to “Covid 19 You destroyed our walking” and this year’s has been awarded to Edward Levy for his “outstanding commitment” and continual dedication to his duties as Chairman and Programme Secretary together with organizing holidays and outings. Edward’s previous holidays have included – Madeira, St Mawes, Tenerife, Austria, Northern Ireland, Isle of Mann and Republic of Ireland. Edward Levy expressed his surprise and thanks for the award and was also presented with a card signed by many members of the group, thanking him for all his years of service.

The Meeting was then closed.