

South Gwent Ramblers

Minutes of the committee meeting held on 30 March 2000

Members present - Ken Phillips (KP), Brian Williams(BW), Adrian Sheehan (AS), Fred Fee (FF), Val Clark (VC), Keith Cooper (KC), Beryl Beer (BB).

Apologies for absence from Ray Cantwell, Andrew Willmott and Ian Reese

Minutes of last meeting adopted with the date changed to 3 February 2000

Matters arising from the minutes

Gelli Gaer did join us on the walk with the Lower Wye Group. **KP to get in touch with them about joining us on special walks.**

AS has a walk leader letter and a form without a synopsis section as yet (samples attached), has no themed walks within the aegis of the RA yet, but maybe in August and has included the Area Ramble in the program of walks. AS has had no luck finding suitable material for training leaders yet.

Officers' reports

Secretary KP presented a list of items received - list attached

KC has given KP a copy of an email received in relation to Pentre Farm.

The Area walk is by Gelli Gaer group at Parc Cwmdaren.

KC indicates that Ray Wensley has adverts on his site and that we could pursue.

BW notes that a board is available from the library and can be booked for a fortnight at a time. **BW will investigate further.**

AS notes that there is also a notice-board in the library. FF noted that we already use it.

KP then said that he was retiring as Chairman and Secretary, largely because of the uncertainty about funding caused by John Ridley's letter by to the committee asking once again for separate funds for paths and other activities. We agreed to defer discussion of this together with more general discussion of funding to the end of the meeting.

Treasurer BW indicates that we have a balance of £1772 and have paid £20 to Tenovus, £100 to the RA to help with Pentre Farm (Thanks from Sue Gitting - we won with costs, but she asked to keep the money for an WoW action and for costs incurred and not paid by the court), £20 to the Coed Craig Ruperra appeal (to be sent when RC provides a recipient address). KP noted that Phillis Richards had died and we agreed to give £20 to Oxfam

Mozambique appeal. BB suggested that it would be better to spend money on support for Ramblers while they are still alive. There was general agreement that we should strive to do so in future.

Footpaths Officer RC was absent

Rambles Officer AS

No moonlight walk in April.

Evening walks start in May.

Apologises for not being able to ask everyone to lead rambles.

Area ramble is set for 11 June.

Arundle walks trip set for 27-29 May.

Will organise an at home with Chris Harris.

Stewart Quick will provide an at home walk on the London weekend.

Just before the program was finalised, South Shropshire declined to come on the Gower walk because of the practical difficulties that the roads would be unusually busy that holiday weekend. They may well join another walk. KP asks if the Gower walk was still on. He has already booked the bus. BB volunteered a long walk. **A meal is to be set up and the short walk finalised.**

BB indicates that she and Jill are prewalking a linear ramble in the Malverns and proposed a minibus to take walkers the length of the ramble. The committee discussed this and agreed that it should go ahead.

KP has paid a deposit for the London coach. **AS agreed to place a flyer in the library.** 38 are needed to break-even. Irene and her husband travel free and it was agreed to provide a box of chocolates (~£8) as an appreciation of Irene's efforts. Lower Wye members were invited on the trip.

AS said that the newsletter was worthwhile. KP said that he got the idea from Lower Wye members.

Membership Secretary VC reports 174 members now compare to 173 at the previous meeting. Two reminders elicited no response. Historically no responses have ever been received. The committee agreed that reminders were not necessary and should no longer be sent especially as the RA send reminders anyway.

Publicity Secretary KS. FF made an A4 portrait poster which Kath Sadler took to Tesco. KP is to give RA leaflet dispensers to Kath Sadler.

Area AGM is proposed for the last Friday in November, but the date is flexible. KP suggested using the Cwmcarn function room. It costs £20 in contrast to the free Civic Centre venue, but provides much cheaper refreshments. BB said that Saturday would be better. **AS will include the event in the program. KP will check the availability of Saturday, 25 November at Cwmcarn.**

Group funds.

BW read from notes of his view and showed us the account of related finances - both attached. This included an offer of his resignation.

KC read from notes attached.

AS said that there were two caricature poles of view, namely blow it all on social events or

be Calvinistically strict about RA rules and regulation. Most views within the group were not so extreme but tended towards one side or the other. The committee should not be afraid to exercise its responsibility on spending wisely. So far we have only had suggestions for social spending: spending on footpaths could only be made in response to suggestions to do so and none have been made so far. If they were they should be considered on merit in the same fair way as had suggestions for social spending.

KC noted that for the first time for a while we had a full committee and we should strive to keep it: only a portion of our subscription is returned to the Group and the funds were ours to spend responsibly.

AS indicated that survey money remained because individuals did not claim all that was due, but nevertheless we should view spending money with less trepidation than at present. In reply to John Ridley, AS proposes to thank him, say that we had considered his letter in depth, indicate the way the committee had agreed on past occasions to handle finance, to encourage him to make suggestions for spending on footpaths and to indicate that we are asking the whole group for suggestions on footpath spending. He also proposed that we underwrite the London, Gower and Malvern walks. BW seconded the proposals and they were carried *nem con*.

After hearing the discussions, general agreement was reached that only one account was necessary. KP withdrew his resignation and BW's offer of resignation was not accepted.

BB has made a list for a group first aid kit, wants approval by an expert and wants paid. We agreed to payment being made when the items were bought.

Any other business.

Next Committee Meeting not set.

Allocation of CCW Monies - Reply by Keith Cooper

1) We have discussed it at length - yes

Agreed nothing - No

We have, as far as I recall, check with Fred, that the committee will decide what we spend money on.

The committee was elected by the members and is thereby responsible for the running of the group. This includes deciding how we raise money and how we spend money.

What we have not decided is what we, the committee are going to spend the money on, on behalf of the group. Essentially, because of a variety of reasons, including not having a chairperson, we have done very little except create hot air.

2) As I understand matters, this is what we were told by an observer at the AGM. We can only spend money on RA objectives. We cannot spend money on things not associated with our (charitable) objectives. You would not expect a tennis club to spend money on a new cricket net. We exist because we are part of the RA, if we were not part of the RA we would be a different club.

The above is not negative it is the situation, fact. We cannot change it, so how can we go forward? Let us try to define two things, What can we spend money on? What are we going to spend money on?

3) What can we spend money on? RA objectives -

The RA “exists to facilitate, for the benefit of everyone, the enjoyment and discovery on foot of Britain’s countryside and to promote respect for life in the countryside”.

“The RA aims to bring a love and understanding of the countryside to the population who never walk there, either because they do not have the means, because their mobility is impaired by disablement, or simply because they have not yet had the opportunity to discover the sense of liberation and enjoyment that walking for pleasure can bring”.

“The association protects Rights of way, campaigns for freedom to roam over uncultivated open country; and defend the beauty of the countryside”.

(Rambler's handbook and Web site)

What does this include? To me, it as much includes puffing on coach trips to encourage people to come with us and enjoy the countryside, as putting up stiles and clearing paths. We as individuals cannot do everything to further every objective of the RA, but collectively, as a group we can. Those who can organise coaches and walks do their bit, those who can go out and survey paths and erect stiles do theirs, those who will write letters, actively canvas, etc. for freedom to roam or to protect rights of way are essential as well. We need a balance ! We have not got it!

We are, now we have a chair, starting to more actively try to attract new members, we have more coach rambles this program than I can ever recall, we have a Website with details of who we are, where we go and what we do,

to attract a new generation? A different cross section of the community? We now need to compliment that with actions on the other side of the coin, here I call on our chairperson to help motivate our members, all members long walkers and leisure walkers, regular walkers and irregular walkers.

The reason for concern over the CCW money, our "SURPLUS", is not because we need to decide on a percentage, we have one account, it is because as a group, long walkers and leisure walkers, need to get off of our nice trim (because we walk and keep ourselves fit!) arses and get out into our beloved WELSH countryside and do something! 5 people in an evening can clear as much path as one person in a day. As far as I am aware the only person to assist Newport CBC with stiles and the like, is Brian Rudge. Where are the other able bodied people? We need to keep the brambles and branches at bay so that we can walk our favourite paths, our local neighbourhood paths, where were the volunteers to act as local path wardens when they were asked to step forward?

I run the Website, I lead walks, I write to MPs, I e-mail AMs. Are we on the committee, the most active, the only ones prepared to give up some time?

HOW CAN WE MOTIVATE THE OTHERS?

If we can motivate people to do more than turn up for the odd walk we can start to pay the RA back for the efforts of those who have done the groundwork that enables us to go out on our walks. Without the efforts of these few we would have little to enjoy. I think many of us underestimate the effort it has taken to keep the path network we have and take it for granted that they will always be there. If we can get some people out for path clearing each month during BST that is 8 sessions more than present, if we can make it once a week imagine the pile of cuttings we could make! We could sponsor gates so that people with wheelchairs can pass, where stiles are an obstruction, we can then put our name on a disc to remind people who did it.

There are many other ways let us be creative.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO SPEND THE MONEY ON?