

South Gwent Ramblers

Minutes of the committee meeting held on 1 May 2001

Members present - Ken Phillips (KP), Brian Williams (BW), Adrian Sheehan (AS), Fred Fee (FF), Kath Sadler (KS), Keith Cooper (KC), Howard Harvey (HH), Andrew Wilmott (AW).

Ruperra Trust

Two members of the Ruperra Trust committee were guests - Derrick Jones (DJ) and Cyril Highman (CH). The trust, set up two years ago, now has 10 or so active friends and about 150 members. The trust has plans to restore the Ruperra woodland area under the guidance of an expert consultant, Alan Underwood. Funds are needed to pay for Alan's advice and for the work to be done. £20,000 is needed so that other match funds (for example from the lottery) would be triggered.

KP introduced our guests, noting that BW had led a walk through the area and that it was a good walk. CH gave some history to the project, noting that first the Morgans, then the Forestry Commission destroyed ancient woodland for commercial planting; the last logs were cleared only last year. The area would be planted with indigenous trees and the Motte and Bailey restored. Ruperra means "pear" and pear trees would be planted. DJ indicated that there are no official footpaths through the area. Nevertheless, paths exist and are to be improved and a bridleway installed.

KP asked if we could visit when the Foot and Mouth outbreak was over. DJ said we would be welcome. **An evening walk would be arranged, possibly guided with the help of a Ruperra Trust member.**

KP said that we could help financially and maybe practically. DJ indicated that he would appreciate help. KP noted that SGR have difficulty obtaining volunteers. AS indicated that action, for example clearing footpaths, may focus attention and attract volunteers.

Summing up, we will discuss giving help. DJ would be interested in filling up our coaches when needed and he noted that Winter walks are organised from the New Community Hall. KP said that we would be interested in the walks and thanked our guests for visiting us.

Apologies for absence from Val Clark and Ray Cantwell.

Minutes of last meeting

Para 6.d.ii change “Evans” to “Booth’s”

Matters arising from the minutes

Para 6.d.vii Christmas dinner could not be booked for Friday 15 December and is now booked for Thursday 14 December.

SGR Foot and Mouth policy We have had various reminders from the RA not to rock the boat. AS will try to organise a programme of occasional walks. We agreed not lobby for opening of footpaths because of the proximity of the disease.

Officers’ reports

Secretary KP - see attached sheet

Walk and Talk KP £100 is available per group for provision of these walks. HH asked what the significance of Walk and Talk was. AS explained that such a walk has to be easy and a given limited distance.

The North Wales secretary wants to object to wind farms in the Snowdon area. BW will cover in his treasurer’s report.

Treasurer BW

Funds have risen slightly to £1478.70. KC and BW attended an Area treasurers’ meeting. Much of the meeting was taken with discussion of RA funding problems. BW presented the following précis. Due to overspending RA head office needs £500,000 in six months. Cash controls were allowed to lapse with the Right to Roam campaign and have been restored. Too much has been given to the Groups. The treasurers’ meeting spent lots of time discussing the RA’s need for our money and their response to proposals made at the last treasurers’ meeting. The RA want groups to have a budget, but BW has difficulty setting a budget without knowledge of future allocations from the RA.

Greater Gwent will donate £500 to Denbigh Moor, Snowdon wind farm appeal, will forgo the last quarter of members’ subscription allocation and will donate £1000 to RA funds. None of this will affect Groups this year, although the effect in following years is uncertain. Surplus funds will be spent on projects according to RA guidelines, while trying to keep funds within Area.

We have made payments to several appeals and funded a first-aid course for walks leaders. The RA recommends reserves of about 40% of budget. (KC noted that the 40% figure was from the RA and not the Charity Commission.) The Area has a target reserve of 20-40%, but individual Groups may vary more. Our budget is about £1000 pa, so the target reserve should be £400. However, there are so many variables that the Groups are generally confused and concerned about increasing RA bureaucracy. At the next meeting, The RA objectives and our preferred response to them will be spelt out.

KC asked if we should have a reserves policy. Warwickshire had looked at its reserves in terms of £ per member: the average is £8 or so. KP indicated that fundraising is hard work and that he favours retaining funds to cover such things as trips and fieldwork. BW noted that we have £300 pa income and money in the bank. What should our reserves policy be with that in mind? How

should he approach a budget? KP suggested setting a maximum estimate for all expenditure items. BW said that he could not make a budget, but could make educated guesses. AS, assuming that nothing changed at Area level, suggested aiming to bring down our reserves to, say, £1000. We could work out expenditure and perhaps spend the rest. FF suggested estimating for Adopt-a-Path, memorial benches, SGR waymarking and other such items that are ramblers-orientated to reduce our residual reserves.

KC noted that we could send another rep to the Area committee, but no volunteers were forthcoming.

Footpaths Officer RC was absent. KC noted that some Groups have a countryside officer, and that our Footpaths Officer encompassed such a post.

Rambles Officer AS

Two urban walks (Gill in Bristol and FF in Newport) have taken place and proposed events include Flatholm (BW), London (KP), Gower (KS), St Fagan's (Tessa) and the Big Pit (KC). AS suggested providing a walks program, generating a list of walkers and 'phoning committee members for distribution. FF suggested a provisional June/July walks program assuming that the Foot and Mouth restrictions remain, as seems likely. The £25 cost of a mailshot was within our compass.

Big Pit KC noted that the Big Pit trip already had nine confirmed participants and will leave Newport at 9:30 on 13 May: the Whistle pub can accommodate a group for a meal and wine at £6.50 a head: an option is to go on to the ironworks. In addition, HH has 'phoned seven and five showed interest. **KP will 'phone some others and AS will ring Alan Booth.**

London trip KP has 34 confirmed names for a 53-seat coach.

Flatholm trip BW indicates that the trip is definitely on. A 40-place booking is accepted, a deposit paid, and a coach booked. Further publicity for the trip could be posted with the Ruperra trust, the Argus and Lower Wye Group. (KC will email Lower Wye). BW was worried that only 20 places have so far been taken up. KC asked if we can take less than 40. BW should finalise numbers within a fortnight, but will seek to extend the deadline in the circumstances, perhaps to 28 May. **KS can ask the Argus to publicise the event in an article, but they usually cannot guarantee a publication date. KC will ring the coach company re bus sizes.** KC has issued a refund policy with email enquiries - no refund on the day and a full refund if cancelling before the cut-off date, otherwise at the discretion of the committee.

Membership Secretary VC not present, but see attached sheet which details membership figures for the Groups in Greater Gwent Area and the Areas in Wales.

Publicity Secretary KS had nothing to report, but BW noted that the library exhibition has been put back indefinitely in view of Foot and Mouth. BW noted that A4 colour prints can be blown up to A3 for 50p at the library.

IT Officer's report KC notes that our site has had 1132 hits, a 148 increase since the last meeting. Proformas for the London and Flatholm trips have been posted together with email enquiry forms. KP would like to archive walks. KC indicates that Area would like a standard database format for walks.

Next Committee Meeting 12 June.

Correspondence for SGR Meeting on 1st May 2001

1.	W.C.E.C. Minutes of Meeting - 17/3/01	File
2.	W.C.E.C. Minutes of Meeting - 18/3/01	File
3.	N.W. Area Sec - Appeal for Funds	File
4.	R.A. Election 2001 - Guidance	File
5.	R.A. Local Recruitment Contacts	File
6.	Countryside Update — March 2001	Ray
7.	R.A. European Car Free Day	File
8.	R.A. - E.C. Bulletin - MArch 2001	Ray
9.	R.A. Welsh Office - TICS & Recruitment	File
10.	S.G.R. - Our Letter to Friends of Ruperra	File
11.	W.C. - 13th A.G.M. Minutes	File
12.	R.A. - Foot & Mouth Advice - 5/4/01	File
13.	R.A. - Foot & Mouth Advice - 12/4/01	File
14.	R.A. - Access Bulletin - April 2001	Ray
15.	R.A. - Distribution of papers list.	File
16.	R.A. - E.C. Minutes 10/11th March 2001	File
17.	R.A. - Countryside Update - April 2001	Ray
18.	R.A. - National W/e Walking - 16/17 June 2001	Adrian
19.	R.A. - F & M Update	File
20.	R.A. - Footpath Campaigner - May 2001	Ray
21.	R.A. - Access Bulletin - May 2001	Ray
22.	R.A. - Notes on Volunteers Conference	All Read/File

