

Members present - Fred Fee, Ken Phillips, Brian Williams, Christine Platteeuw, Derek Humble, Adrian Sheehan, Jan Wagenaar, Diana Osman, Brian Turner, Dave Fereday.

1. *Apologies for absence* from Val Clark.
2. *Minutes of last meeting* were adopted
3. *Matters arising from the minutes*
 - 3.1. The first Skittles date is now 26 March.
 - 3.2. The minimum number of participants needed for Dewstow to accept a group booking is 15: currently 11 have shown interest and the trip will be off unless numbers increase sufficiently. Dewstow cannot now provide a tour guide for the trip and the charge for the trip will now be £5.
 - 3.3. There are no insurance implications for the joint walk with the Pembroke Ramblers which is now to be led by Adrian *in lieu* of Fred who is injured.
 - 3.4. John Smith is standing in for Fred for the walk on 26 April advertised under the auspices of the Monmouthshire Walking Weekend.
 - 3.5. The Minehead trip is now finalised with Ian Reese and Dinah Wallis doing long and short walks.
 - 3.6. Dave has booked accommodation for the hardy souls walking in the Cairngorms and indicated that the walks are still open to anyone providing their own accommodation.
 - 3.7. The Severn Bore trip will now take place on 20 September and leave at 8:15 from the Civic Centre. The trip will now start with a walk along the River so that the Bore can be observed from the path during the walk: the Bore's exact time of arrival is unreliable and this arrangement obviates a wait at the assembly point.
 - 3.8. Diana has booked two pitches at Tintern for 9 August for the Barbecue.
 - 3.9. Diana has Booked the AGM for November 15 at the Llanishen Village Hall: Diana will lead a walk before the meeting. Kath, Val and Ken will organise refreshments.
 - 3.10. Fred reported that the April to July programmes were now ready to go: Ken is to provide text for an updated Newsletter with an updated events list: the newsletter will accompany the programmes.
4. *Officers' reports*
 - 4.1. *Secretary* Ken Phillips
 - 4.1.1. Ken suggested that, at a future meeting, we will have to discuss the Ramblers Code of Conduct for leaders, but but there was not time at this meeting. The meeting agreed.
 - 4.1.2. John Kingdom broke his ankle on a Sunday walk and was rescued by the mountain rescue helicopter. Ken filled in a Ramblers Report because the incident involving substantial injury to a walker. We donated a £50 towards the cost of the helicopter. Since all groups in the Greater Gwent Area rely to an extent on the helicopter, Ken suggested to Area that they should donate a regular contribution to the cost of maintaining the helicopter. They replied that it was a Group issue and that they had no objection to us sending an annual small donation each year and charge it to the annual budget. We agree to do so.
 - 4.1.3. Jan noted that Taha Lazim carried a survival tent which was instrumental in maintaining John Kingdom's comfort in severe wind-chill on a frosty day. He suggested that we obtain a survival tent to be carried by leaders when surmountably severe conditions are expected during a walk. The meeting noted that the problems with buying equipment have always

been where to store it and how to distribute it: passing from leader to leader is prone to error and one person storing and distributing the equipment has usually been unpopular. Fred suggested that equipment should be stored for distribution by the holder of the appropriate Office whoever the current Officer was at the time. There was no consensus at the meeting. Jan will look into the problem and will report back to the meeting.

4.1.4. We currently lead walks for the blind. Ken will send a list of them to Fred for insertion into the programme of walks.

4.1.5. Ken asked whether we are putting forward a walk for the Ramblers' "Get Walking" initiative. We were not. Fred said that the last time we put on a walk for the event, nobody turned up for it, yet Pontypool and North Gwent Ramblers have had success in attracting large numbers to their walks. Fred will contact Pontypool and North Gwent Ramblers to establish how they successfully publicised their events.

4.1.6. Ken presented the list of correspondence that he had received:

1	Ramblers	Insurance Guide	Oct 08	Discuss/File
2	Ramblers	Code of Conduct	Oct 08	Discuss/File
3	SGR	Letter to Adrian re John Kingdom's Accident		File
4	SGR	Letter to Wales Air Ambulance		File
5	SGR	Letter to Ramblers re JK's Accident		File
6	SGR	Letter to Perkins Slade re JK's Accident		File
7	SGR	Letter to Pembroke Ramblers		File
8	GAB	Letter asking for Walks Leaders		File
9	SGR	Letter from Keith Cooper		File
10	Planning Inspectorate	Ruperra Castle Hearing		File
11	Ramblers	Welsh Rambler Distribution	Feb 09	File
12	SGR	Letter & Invoice to Ramblers Holidays	Feb 09	File
13	Ramblers	Get Walking Day Circular	Feb 09	Christine
14	Ramblers	Footpath Worker	Feb 09	Derek
15	Ramblers Holidays	Brochure		Any takers

4.2. *Treasurer* Brian Williams

4.2.1. The current balance is £1647. We have received our half-year budget of £578 and spent £291 on a new colour laser printer acquired by Fred. Fred will sell the old mono laser printer. The Christmas dinner broke even.

4.2.2. At the Area AGM Maurice Turner (Area Treasurer) brought up the vexed question of the amount of reserves that Groups should hold and the AGM minutes show that the Area view was that Groups should continue as they are: however, a letter from Area confused the issue by saying that Group reserves should be 40% of expenditure. Adrian added that Maurice has suggested to Ramblers that Wales retains its reserves for distribution to Welsh Groups and use in Wales rather than giving it to English Ramblers: he awaits an outcome to the suggestion. Area are interested in ideas for profitably using the reserves. Suggestions include events for marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of Ramblers, coastal access works, giving money to Councils for work on stiles &c and for events marking the award of "Welcome to Ramblers" status to Cross Keys.

4.2.3. We are due to pay Keith £36 for maintaining our web presence. Fred noted that Keith is currently starting from scratch to build a new SGR web site in line with the Ramblers' new branding guidelines.

4.3. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble

4.3.1. There has been one Footpath Diversion Application since the last report, but this will not detract from the present route if it is passed.

4.3.2. Other applications have been received for planning permission for extensions to dwellings close to Rights of Way, but are of little consequence to Ramblers.

4.3.3. Planned housing is being considered at Tredegar Park Golf Club and Lysaghts Institute.

4.3.4. The work planned to be carried out on the Rhymney River Bridge and associated river training near Draethen is now expected to cost more than £400,000 and is therefore likely to be spread over 3 years.

4.3.5. Efforts are continuing to establish new and improved rights of way, especially in the Caldicot and Wentlooge Levels areas in conjunction with Coastal Access objectives.

4.4. *Rambles Officer* Christine Platteeuw

4.4.1. The new walks programme is now complete.

4.4.2. Ken has received a list of walks for the Torfaen Walking Festival in June.

4.5. *Membership Secretary* Val Clark

Membership is now 193. Maggie Thomas has checked lapsed members and they are correct. Members received membership cards with reminders that subscriptions were due for renewal and this put members on the wrong foot, making them think that they had already paid.

4.6. *Publicity Secretary* Fred Fee

4.6.1. Fred gave a synopsis of the following branding report because of time constraints.

4.6.2. **BRANDING**

4.6.3. I attended a Branding Workshop in Swansea, sparsely attended by groups and excellently presented by three young Ramblers representatives, two from London and Annwen Parker from Wales Ramblers. Eleven others attended from Groups in West Wales and round Birmingham. Copious notes were provided by the fundraising manager from London aided and abetted by Annwen Parker, the walking officer for Wales, and Sophie Dawson, the publicity officer from London. The meeting was in two parts, a presentation of a new ways in which the Ramblers would seek to promote a better understanding by the public of what the Ramblers do, and a discussion afterwards.

4.6.4. Consultations made by the Ramblers to find out how the public felt about the ramblers and what they did reveal that the public had little conception about the breadth of the ramblers operations. A typical comment made by the public was "We think of ramblers as a group of 20 or more 60-year-olds walking in fields with sticks". The Ramblers employed consultants to help them work out what to do in their presentation, advertising and lobbying to correct misconceptions. In doing this, they thought it would be worthwhile presenting a more unified image and a full part of the package was to try to use more uniform logos and presentation of documents.

4.6.5. There was a disappointingly sparse attendance, but those who did attend started out sceptical, perhaps not as sceptical as I was, but much of their scepticism was assuaged by the excellent standard of presentation and the reasoning behind it. It was still felt that there was an element of prescription. The main logo for England was different from the Welsh one, causing a little discomfort among some of those attending, since wording in the Welsh part of the logo translated in English as "The Ramblers", whereas the English part read "Ramblers Cymru", that is English-language followed by a Welsh language.

4.6.6. Generally, the presentation was surprisingly well received and almost all of it was convincing.

4.6.7. I asked whether we could justify buying a colour laser printer for SGR publications and the answer was an unqualified "Yes". The layout of any documents should include an unusual font called "Stag" which I was assured cost "about £20". The site given in the RA notes for the presentation gives the site from which the font may be downloaded. The minimum cost of Light, Medium and Bold weights (or alternatively Light, Book and Semibold weights as the font is on the heavy side) is \$225 and I am awaiting advice from the RA as to whether to proceed to buy a set of three weights of the font. The full font set is \$350. I think the RA publicity branch have misread the prices.

4.6.8. One thing that was stressed was not to use the word Group in any of our logos, since that was one of the words that put people off seeking to join the Ramblers.

4.6.9. **Why do we need a new brand?**

4.6.10. Ramblers see their role as being at the heart of walking. Extensive research has shown that the public lack awareness of the Ramblers' work and overwhelmingly think of the Ramblers as being old-fashioned and often unappealing. The brand is the key to through which the ramblers will communicate their work in a flexible and diverse way to reach both existing and new audiences.

- 4.6.11. We need a new logo because the current one is considered by all to be old-fashioned, meaningless and even “cheap”. The logo represents an upright tree structure and the smooth stone which combine in the shape of the letter r.
- 4.6.12. The new name is “The Ramblers”, rather than as now “The Ramblers’ “, “RA”, or “RACO”.
- 4.6.13. **How does the branding effect groups?**
- 4.6.14. The new logo and visual themes should appear in all ramblers stationery publications stands, banners and anything else that the public might see, so that the Ramblers brand becomes readily discernible by the public. The Ramblers have published guidelines, templates and examples online. New branding should be used from 2 March 2009 onwards and the old branded material should be phased out by 31 March 2010: this is important as 2010 is the Ramblers’ 75th anniversary.
- 4.6.15. No new funding is available for the new branding that should be reflected in group budgets.
- 4.6.16. The rebranding exercise will cost money. The Ramblers consider that this is money well spent because our current image puts people off joining the organisation and loses the Ramblers more money than they will spend on the branding.
- 4.6.17. **OTHER PUBLICITY MATTERS**
- 4.6.18. I bought a ream of white paper and 200 second-class stamps.
- 4.6.19. I could not make a Publicity and Recruitment workshop for 21 April 2009 and all places on an alternative date were taken. However, I suggest that the current level of publicity suffices in keeping the group at an optimal size.
- 4.6.20. I met members of Sandwell Ramblers at the Branding Workshop. We will welcome them to a walk in September at Llanthony and will be their guests for a walk at Birdlip in October.
- 4.6.21. The Summer walks programme data is ready and will be published within a week.
- 4.6.22. I cannot walk at the moment because of injury. As a result Adrian will kindly lead the walk with the Pembroke Ramblers on 25 April and I am still looking for a volunteer to lead the walk on 26 April.

4.7. *IT Officer's report* Keith Cooper

In Keith’s absence, Fred reported that Keith is in the process of rewriting the SGR site from scratch and will probably simplify it. The forum remained unused but he asked whether a committee forum should remain. The committee agreed that a committee forum was a good idea. Fred will inform Keith. A suggestion for the web site is that a link should be made to sites that allow for reporting of unauthorised motorised vehicles on footpaths and causing damage to the land. Again Fred will advise Keith.

4.8. *Area report* Adrian Sheehan

- 4.8.1. The Area Walk is set for 20 September and the AGM for 8 November.
- 4.8.2. The Ramblers are setting up a stall at this year’s Caerphilly Big Cheese event. Any information to Maggie Thomas.

5. *AOB*

- 5.1. Brian reported that an inquiry into the planning application at Ruperra Castle is set for 10am at Ystrad Mynach.
- 5.2. Brian noted a 2.5-mile Daffodil Walk at Ruperra on Saturday 21 March. It leaves at 10am, easily back in time for the rugby at 2pm!

6. *Next committee meeting* on Thursday 4 June **at the earlier time of 7pm.**