

Members present - Roger Binding, Phyllis Clayton, Fred Fee, Derek Humble, Joan Lang, Ken Phillips, Adrian Sheehan, Brian Turner, Ivor Barclay.

1. *Apologies for absence* from Dave Fereday, Steve Atkins and Brian turner
2. *Minutes of last meeting* were adopted with the proviso that Ken Phillips would be added to the list of apologies for absence.
3. *Matters arising from the minutes*
 - 3.1. *Re para 4.6.1* Derek did not contact Tim Wroblewski except by email saying that he did not think our possible input was within the remit of the questionnaire.
 - 3.2. *Re para 4.6.2* Fred conducted a straw poll and the answer as “No”.
 - 3.3. *Re para 6.1* Derek had a concomitant point that we should issue a Guidance for Preparing Walks, particularly in winter, for example on the importance of checking of possible escape routes. Adrian noted that there had been a large turn-over in walks leaders since the last time that guidance was issued. Roger said that advice should include the planning of a backup walk if a mountain walk was not possible on the day. Roger thought that walk descriptions this year were accurate. Phyllis thought that a recce was necessary. Adrian thought that a leader of an advertised walk has a responsibility to describe a walk accurately. Ken will organise a meeting.
 - 3.4. *Re para 6.2* Phyllis visited Kath Carter and reported that she was now well and could walk.
4. *Officers' reports*
 - 4.1. *Secretary* Colin Wallace
 - 4.1.1. Area is conducting an Area and Group review at the behest of the Ramblers Association. Ken filled in an Ramblers Association form detailing what we do and what we thought area do. Adrian filled in a corresponding for for Area.
 - 4.1.2. Newport City Council are holding an over-50s event in Newport Sports Centre. Fred reported that Ivor had booked a stall for Newport Outdoor Group and invited South Gwent Ramblers to share it. Fred will organise the South Gwent Ramblers content.
 - 4.1.3. The Ramblers Association have organised a Pathwatch scheme which seeks to survey all of the footpaths in Britain. The survey is based on a smartphone app whereby comments and photographs of the state of paths are sent to the Ramblers Association for them to compile. Fred has joined the scheme and surveyed some paths.
 - 4.1.4. Keith Donovan, our Area Chairman, attended a meeting on Ramblers Association governance. which got nowhere. [Currently the Ramblers Association appear to favour a top-down approach where an Area does a lot of the work now done locally in the Groups.] The meeting was attended by the Wales chair, to meet Gwent and Cardiff members. The consensus at the meeting was that a bottom-up approach makes us happy (and is adopted by Greater Gwent Area) and that a top-down approach is not necessary. The Wales chair indicated that the the bottom-up approach is also favoured in the rest of the country.

4.1.5. Phyllis has booked Machen Village Hall for the South Gwent Ramblers AGM and will make sure it is open for us. Roger is leading the morning walk at 10.00am. Colin and Sue will organising refreshments . Meet at Newport Civic Centre at 9.30am or at Hall.

4.2. *Treasurer* Ken Phillips

Our bank balance at 1 March 2015 was £950.50. Since that date we have received our final allocation from Area £280 Bank Interest £0.57 and Ramblers Holidays £60. We have paid out £50 to the Air Ambulance, Pre-walk Expense £230.57, Admin Expense £72.28 (includes first aid course). Our bank balance at 1 August 2015 is £938.22.

We have issued a cheque for £60 to Machen Village Hall to reserve the hall for our AGM in November 2015. They have not cashed it to date and the cost will be shown in next year's accounts.

4.3. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble

The modification order for the bridleway at Llandevaud Mill, mentioned in several previous reports, has been granted following a successful appeal.

I have further objected on the grounds of non-viability of the proposed route due to several local topographical features *viz.* depth of stream, no headroom for horse riders and insufficient width of track.

I have requested a site visit by the inspector and local authority as one has not been made previously.

Countryside Access Management have consulted me in regard to altering the route of a footpath in Liswerry alongside the River Usk which was previously unused for a number of years. I was in agreement with the new line of the path which is now completed and only a few feet away from the original. This has been constructed as a cycleway as well. There is now a continuous path from the SDR bridge near Lysaghts on Corporation Road to Newport Bridge on the east bank, and from there to the Transporter Bridge on the west bank.

Plans for a wind turbine have been resubmitted on a smaller scale following refusal at Castle Farm, Bishton. Similar plans have been submitted for Clearwell Farm near Michaelstone, where planning has already been granted for new tracks across farm land to enable construction of said turbine. This latter proposal would destroy views across the green belt between Newport and Cardiff.

A safer route across the main railway line at Marshfield has been granted, utilising an existing bridge. This should be completed alongside the engineering works for the electrification of the line.

4.3.1. Derek said that there is now no money from Newport City Council for the upkeep of footpaths. However, grants are readily available from the Welsh government; all you have to do is put in a reasoned request.

4.4. *Rambles Officer* Dave Fereday was not present

4.4.1. Dave had asked Colin to point out that there was a shortage of leaders for moderate walks. Moderate walks at the same time as a shorter long walks were not well supported. He suggested that an item in the Newsletter lets members know that if moderate walks are not supported, there may not appear in the walks programme. Phyllis and Joan noted that some moderate walks are well supported.

4.4.2. Adrian noted that a "Let's Walk Cymru" promotion is being run by the Ramblers Association on behalf of the Government, with walks of 3-5 miles and that we should publicise any of our short walks under the scheme.

4.4.3. Roger reported one success. His walk on a bank holiday Sunday, part of our walks programme and the first on a bank holiday for some time, was well supported.

4.5. *Membership Secretary* Joan Lang reported that membership was steady and is now numbers 141. She now receives phone calls from prospective new members and should have her number

on the edition of walks programme for non-members. Likewise Colin's mobile number could be added.

4.6. *Publicity Secretary* Fred Fee reported that almost all new members now find us via the Ramblers Association and South Gwent Ramblers web sites and that publicity is now more directed to them. Nevertheless, we still publish our walks in the What's On section of the South Wales Argus and occasionally receive queries as a result.

4.7. *IT Officer's report* Fred Fee reported that he has kept our sites up-to-date and published and distributed walks programmes from data provided by Dave.

4.8. *Area* Adrian Sheehan

Adrian has been in touch with the Ramblers Association about their manner when phoning lapsed members, which upset some Islwyn members.

The Area put in a budget request of £4,500 of which £3,500 is for Groups.

Walks of 10 and 6 miles have been organised for the Area Walk.

Adrian reminded us that the end of year accounts were due to be presented to the Area.

The Area AGM will take place on 8 November with a walk starting at 10am and the AGM starting at 2pm and light refreshments for those attending the AGM.

As usual, the Area Newsletter will be provided in electronic form and Adrian reminded us that an item from South Gwent Ramblers is usually provided.

Adrian mentioned a Wales' Chair meeting, but there was no interest in attending.

The AGM will discuss a replacement for Minutes Secretary since Fred has resigned from the position.

A "Let's Walk Cymru" event, run by the Ramblers Association is being promoted by the Welsh Assembly, involving the organisation of walks up to 3 or 4 miles. LWC representatives and Ramblers Association Groups are to meet to discuss the event. "Let's walk Newport" part of the event involving Healthy Walks and others - see their leaflet at http://www.newport.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/leaflets_and_brochures/cont371329.pdf

The leaflet contains walks as contemplated by LWC and some longer ones.

5. *Events gone by* report by Ken

5.1. *1st Coach Trip* Buddleigh Salteron 17 May – Derek led the long and short walk. Our revisit To Bicton Gardens was enjoyed by all and the day was rounded off by an excellent carvery meal. My thanks to Derek and Mary for their help.

5.2. *Boules* – The weather was not good this year and our competition had to be cut short. Our winners this year were Jan, Dave, Chris, Sue, Dinah and Babs. Thanks Dave for organizing the night.

5.3. *BBQ* – Excellent weather this year, Derek led last years walk, My thanks to Phyllis and Joan for purchasing the food, John and Doug for cooking it and everyone else who helped on the day.

5.4. *2nd Coach Trip* Oxford 12 July – Derek led a 10 mile linear walk and Joan took us around Oxford with a visit to Magdalen University College. We had a full coach and for once the short walkers outnumbered the long. We stopped off for a meal on the way home and a good day was had by all.

5.5. *Week Away* Guernsey 5 to 9 October – Thirty-eight of us are soon to be off. We have a good itinerary and if the weather is fair we should have an excellent holiday.

6. *Events to come*

6.1. *Week Away* Guernsey 5 to 9 October – Thirty-eight of us are soon to be off. We have a good itinerary and if the weather is fair we should have an excellent holiday

- 6.2. *Area Ramble* 27 September – North Gwent are hosts, starting at Ty Ebbw Fach (Six Bells) at 10.00am. Light refreshments at end of walk. Area AGM – 8 November – Gelligaer are hosts. At Machen Village Hall. More details later
- 6.3. *Area AGM* – 8 November from the same venue as the South Gwent Ramblers AGM and a very similar format with a 10am walk and light refreshments for those attending the AGM. Ken noted that next year, it is our turn to organise the Area AGM.
- 6.4. *Skittles Night* – 12 November – Whiteheads 7.30pm.
- 6.5. *SGR AGM* – 22nd November. The composition of the Committee will be decided at the AGM. Those present at the meeting are willing to stand for selection. The meeting, at Machen Village Hall, will be preceded by a walk lead by Roger and light refreshments for those attending the AGM. The walk differs from that provided at the Area AGM from the same venue. Colin and Sue will provide the refreshments. Colin said that the budget for food needed to be increased and the committee agreed. He also said that some individuals take too much and that the non-walkers and short walkers should await the long walkers arrival before starting to take their refreshments: the committee agreed. Meet at the Newport Civic Centre at 9:30am: the walk leaves Machen Village Hall at 10am.
- 6.6. *Christmas Dinner* – 10 December – Newport Golf Club
- 6.7. *Christmas Lunch* – 29 December - Fred asked for suggestions for a new venue and the Alice Springs and The Clytha Arms were suggested.
- 6.8. Ken said that he will not be organising the week away next year because of personal commitments. The committee thanked Ken for organising the weekends away and many other events each year for many a year. Ken then asked where we could go next year. Ivor suggested a trip to Ireland.
7. *Other events news*
 - 7.1. A visit to *Dewstow Grotto*, planned for June, could not take place because we could not meet the conditions which Dewstow Gardens insists on.
 - 7.2. *Slimbridge* We could not find a way to meet their requirements in time for the visit. Perhaps next year?
 - 7.3. Ken noted that it is South Gwent Ramblers turn to host the *Area AGM* for 2016.
8. *Next committee meeting* date is to be decided at the AGM