



# South Gwent Ramblers



Minutes of the Committee meeting held on  
7 March 2017 at Newport Civic Centre

*Members present* - Roger Binding, Fred Fee, Dave Fereday, Derek Humble, Joan Lang, Sheila Holmes and Charles Goodreid.

1. *Apologies for absence* Julie Davies, Colin Wallace, Ivor Barclay, Arian Sheehan.
2. *Minutes of last meeting* were adopted
3. *Matters arising from the minutes* none
4. *Officers' reports*
  - 4.1. *Chairman* [vacant] Fred chaired the meeting *pro tem*
  - 4.2. *Secretary* Colin Wallace was absent and had not reported any matters
  - 4.3. *Treasurer* Roger Binding
    - 4.3.1. The bank balance stands at £1091.80 which includes the first half of the amount we requested in our budget.
    - 4.3.2. A budget cut from the Ramblers Association head office appears to be in the offing although no tangible information was available at an Area meeting on 4 January. Nevertheless, we may have to make do with a lesser amount for the second half of the year. The annual Welsh Council meeting will take place in early April: the next Area meeting will no doubt furnish news of any cuts.
    - 4.3.3. Fred will contact Adrian for dates and venues of the Welsh Council and Area meetings.
    - 4.3.4. Fred agreed to circulate expenses forms to members to encourage them to claim for the costs incurred on behalf of South Gwent Ramblers, especially for pre-walking expenses.
  - 4.4. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble

There is a proposal to divert the Usk Valley Walk footpath around Woodward's Farm, Coed y Caerau following the start of work to rebuild the farm after many years of neglect. The new route is not markedly different to the existing one and the views over the Usk Valley and Celtic Manor Golf Club will be improved, so I am not objecting to the proposal.

The solar farm planned for Court Farm, Llanmartin, which is on the Penhow Langstone Circular Walk is almost complete following an appeal and plans modification reducing the number of solar panels. This has allowed more room for the footpath alongside the installation. We were originally to have 3 metres width but now have about 10 metres, so we won't be hemmed in.

The proposed gypsy site on Bulmore Road which was refused by NCC has been allowed following an appeal to the WAG ministers and will possibly affect the Usk Valley Walk in years to come.

The Public Enquiry for a bridleway at The Old Mill, Langstone has resulted in the creation of a Restricted Byeway whose route has yet to be decided.

There have also been a few minor modifications and diversions of little consequence.

- 4.5. *Rambles Officer* Dave Fereday had nothing to report

#### 4.6. *Membership Secretary* Joan Lang

4.6.1. Joan reported that we now have 132 members.

4.6.2. She then passed on sad news that Steve Atkins has reluctantly resigned from the committee and will let his membership lapse, because of changes in his personal circumstances.

#### 4.7. *Publicity Secretary* [vacant]

#### 4.8. *IT Officer's report* Fred Fee

4.8.1. Fred has been having troubles. Virginmedia messed up Fred's email system after locking him out of his email service.

4.8.2. A further trouble is in producing the web site. Fred received an announcement of closure from the company which writes the application that Fred uses for generating the web site. They will leave manuals on the web, but will not update the application. The application should work for three at most before changes to Mac operating systems and web protocol make its use untenable. Fred is therefore trying to get to grips with an up-to-date application which uses a totally different approach to building a site. It may take six months or so for him to produce a new beta lesion of the site.

4.8.3. The "Walk the Port" day walking festival was a success this year, considering that the worst weather for a year or so blighted the event. Undaunted, the Newport CC have announced that event will return in September this year. South Gwent Ramblers members are once again involved.

### 5. *Events calendar*

#### *Events gone by*

5.1. The **Christmas Dinner** suffered a lower-than-expected turn-out in the low 20s. The food was good, The service was good. Suitably nourished and served, those present more than made up for their numerical paucity with renditions of carols with even more gusto than usual. The compère, specially brought all the way from the North East, kept the pot boiling despite some friendly hckling. The raffle sparkled with the usual array of prizes for the lucky winners. What an evening.

5.2. The **Christmas walk and lunch** was held at the Hall Inn again. Members were treated to a new walk. Early atmospherically crisp, frosty conditions in mist and fog enhanced the first half of the walk (thanks to Peter Elliott for the super description): paths in old fields with loose boundaries were reminiscent of the open countryside in earlier days before the "Inclosure" Acts (beginning 1604). Later, the mist gave way to winter sunshine and good views in typical Gwent rolling countryside. The walkers joined the non-walkers in the Hall Inn restaurant room made more cosy by a wood fire, The food was to the usual good standard of the Hall Inn and the company up to the usual good South Gwent Ramblers standard. All too soon, our members, now replete, made their way home.

5.3. Dave's **Burns Night Supper** walk had to be put forward to 20 February because of the vicissitudes of Wetherspoons' Burns night timetable. A walk from Caerphilly to Ystrad Mynach, returning by train, attracted "at least 20" and ended with haggis, neeps and mash.

#### *Events to come*

5.4. With regard to the **Skittles** match. Jan Wagenaar had wrongly been told recently that the cost of hiring the skittles alley at Whiteheads was going up to an extent that we could not afford. That news was tempered by a chat to a committee member at Whiteheads who eventually came up with a cost that we could one again afford but with an attendance of 30. The committee was

aware that St Julians pub on Caerleon Road had an alley and did not charge for its use providing that catering was bought from the bar. The NOGs had no complaints at this arrangement. After some discussion Roger suggested that we go ahead with the Whiteheads event. If the numbers are once again low we we should look at St Julians pub. The committee agreed to the suggestion.

- 5.5. Joan reports that only 21 have so far booked a place on the **Stourhead** trip whereas 30 are needed for a successful trip. Further bookings should be notified to Joan by 7 April.
- 5.6. Dave asked about the **Barbecue** and Derek agreed to book the event on **6 August at Tintern**.
- 5.7. Fred said that he would start to make plans for the day trip to Bath soon. The committee then wondered whether a place further afield than Bath would be better for a day trip since Bath is accessible for a day's walk without the need for a coach. Eventually, we settled on **Salisbury** as being a more suitable venue. Fred was happy to go along with this. A date of **20 August** was better than the previous date so as to spread out the timing of our trips. Dave volunteered an 8-mile walk taking in Stonehenge and Sheila offered to talk to Fred about facilities and features of Salisbury. Joan said that the pub that we visited on the way back from her Stratford trip was close enough to Salisbury to use for the Salisbury trip and will furnish Fred with details.
- 5.8. Regarding the Newquay trip on 2 October, Joan said that there are 10 single rooms up for grabs and that a £25pp deposit would be needed by May. Joan will lead a short walk and Ian a long one.
- 5.9. Fred will seek a date for the October skittles match, if there is one, from Jan Wagenaar. There is currently a feeling in the committee that, if numbers remain low for attendances at skittles matches, we take it is a sign that the skittles events have run their course: we then should seek other events that will attract a following.
- 5.10. Dave suggested that unfilled places on trips could be filled by contacting other Gwent Ramblers Association Groups and offering places to their members. The committee thought that this was a good idea.

## 6. *AOB*

- 6.1. The committee agreed that the position of Vice Chairwoman should be abandoned.
- 6.2. Fred raised the matter of publicising walks. Joan said that she answered emails from South Gwent Ramblers and the Ramblers Association, but answers rarely result in new walkers coming to the walks. Fred answers phone calls originating from contact details in the South Gwent Ramblers site and, like Joan, rarely sees anyone come to our walk as a result.
- 6.3. Dave said that few members were attending evening walks. Derek had bumped into a Group of Monmouthshire ramblers one evening and they had only 10 attending. The committee decided that the walks should continue for the time being.
- 6.4. Fred indicated that the current printer had run out of toner. He went on to note that it was using too much toner and that the toner was very expensive compared to like toner for modern machines. An article in a forum that Fred follow, largely populated by professional IT workers and programmers, recently discussed cheap, workhorse colour laser printers. One or two stood out for quality, longevity and value. Fred investigated and found that one of them could be obtained with a supply of toner for the same price as just toner for our current printer. Fred suggest buying this printer and toner instead of new toner for the old machine. The committee agreed.

## 7. *Next committee meeting* on Tuesday 11 July