



South Gwent Ramblers

Minutes of the annual general meeting held on
19 October 2000

Members present - Ken Phillips (KP), Brian Williams (BW), Fred Fee (FF), Val Clark (VC), Kath Sadler (KS), Keith Cooper (KC), Ian Reese (IR), John Ridley (JR), Howard Harvey (HH), Terry Squires (TS) - Wales RA Chairman.

Apologies for absence Andrew Willmott, Ray and Kath Cantwell and Adrian Sheehan.

Minutes of last meeting FF professed embarrassment and tendered profuse apologies for having lost the minutes of last year's AGM from his hard disc.

Matters arising from the minutes see above

Officers' reports

Chairman's Report KP

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

The new Millennium has proved a very interesting first Year as your Chairman. I have experienced some high and low points during the year, however in the main I have enjoyed it and hope that my contribution has been of help to the group.

As you are all aware the highlight of the year to date has been the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill, and it's historic freedom to roam provision. Having negotiated the House of Commons it is now being discussed in the House of Lords. It appears they have several hundred possible amendments and it could be months before it becomes law. I am sure the R.A. will keep up the pressure on the Government and we can also play our part by making sure our Assembly Members are made aware of our needs. We should also make every effort to support Access Day 2000.

Our group was involved in a very unsavoury incident at Pentre farm earlier in the year. The case was won in the courtroom, but I understand from reports from the Greater Gwent Area Council we could still experience problems unless Mon. C.C. act quickly and close the "GAP".

Finally I would like to record my thanks to all those individuals who have led walks, organised group events and served on the committee. THANK YOU ALL - without your help we would not exist.

Welsh Assembly Members are working to organise an extension of the coastal path. Jill has provisionally agreed to organise a Christmas walk and meal at the Huntsman on 28 December.

KP has written to Jean and Arthur wishing them well: they phoned back and said they would be

at the Christmas walk.

The London walk is on this year's Lower Wye Group walks programme.

Christmas dinner is now to be booked for Thursday, 7 December since the originally proposed date was already taken.

KP proposed a tour of Penhow Castle including mince pies in the main hall and a visit to the Rock and Fountain afterwards. We agreed that this should go ahead.

KP informed us that Reg Evans has Alzheimer's disease and is in very poor condition.

KC and Adrian Sheehan attended a Greater Gwent Area special meeting to discuss money in hand at Area level and agreed in the light of what was said to abstain on a vote as to whether the money should be allocated to the Groups or stay at Area. A further meeting to discuss a paper by JR is mooted. There may be a change in the focus of Area from looking up to the Welsh Office more to looking down to the groups.

Secretary KP

SECRETARY' S REPORT

Keiron O'Hagan, the newly elected Chairman of the Greater Gwent Area Council was our guest at our committee meeting on the 3 February 2000. He was asked and did take an active part in the discussions of the evening. What's more it was quite refreshing to hear his views on how rambling could be improved in our neck of the woods.

Have you visited our website yet?. It is up and running. The address is :-

<http://website.lineone.net/south-gwent-ramblers>. Any problems or suggestions give our site manager Keith Cooper a ring. It is an excellent addition to our publicity efforts and thanks to all concerned in it's formation and updating.

Our social calendar was well supported as usual. We held our Xmas Dinner at Newport Golf Club once again and a Xmas Walk in Shirenewton after Xmas. This was followed by lunch at the Huntsman Inn. A big thank you to Gill Griffin for leading the walk despite atrocious weather.

We were guests of S.W.Sussex Ramblers over the Spring Bank Holiday and a splendid weekend away was enjoyed by all who went. Our thanks to Beryl Beer in setting it up.

Our coach trip was a bit different this year. We visited London and proceeded to take a walk in the park, so to speak. In fact it was a lot of parks, museums, galleries and other interesting sites. An outstanding success and I am pleased to announce that a further trip has been arranged for next year. Our thanks to Irene & Don Dodd for leading the walk.

Sadly the year has had less agreeable occasions and we have lost some treasured friends through illness, death and relocation. We extend our sympathy to those families who have lost loved ones and our good wishes for a speedy recovery to those who have been beset by illness.

shopping on the internet can now benefit the RA by using the freegive feature on the RA's site. New membership leaflets are delayed.

The McMillan way sponsored walk organisers are charging £9 for the walk booklet or £3.50 for a smaller leaflet. We may have to go our own way on this one after TS noted that we cannot use our funds to underwrite an event raising funds for a charity other than the RA. We will work round the issue.

Footpath Campaigner leaflet notes footpaths day on 8 July 2001 and a campaign roadshow in

Bristol on 4 November 2000.

CCW Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 1 November at 9am at the Angel Hotel,
Abergavenny

[TS commenting on the Secretary's job noted that the first thing you have to learn is which
bits of bumph to bin and which to keep.]

Treasurer BW - accounts attached

Last year we made a loss but are comfortable with this and can afford it. Recruiting extra travellers and a raffle on the coach offset the small loss on the London coach tour. Raffles &c also reduced the cost of the Christmas dinner. Monmouthshire BS interest will appear in next year's accounts. the Tennovus donation last year was paid by a cheque that was not presented. a new cheque has been presented. The RA donation helped pay for expenses accrued and yet not covered by court expenses awarded as a result of the Pentre farm court action. The first aid course expense was courtesy of a late bill from Newport CC for equipment used during the course. KC proposed and KS seconded the adoption of the accounts and they were adopted *nem con*.

Footpaths Officer RC

FOOTPATHS OFFICER'S REPORT

This report covers footpaths within the area of Newport C.C.B.. Within Newport C.B.C. there exists a network of paths totalling approximately 3000km. During the year a number of F.P. diversion requests have been dealt with. In the majority of cases acceptable alternatives have been offered and there have been no reasons to object.

Objections, however, were lodged in connection with .FP 18 at Coedkernew and FP 52 at Marshfield.

A number of footpaths within Newport have been added to the definitive map as local residents have claimed that the ways have been used as PFPs for at least twenty years.

Unfortunately, greenfield sites are being developed for housing and sometimes PFPs are affected by being rerouted through housing developments. PEP 18a in Caerleon is an example of how a PEP has been made less enjoyable and attractive.

Proposed outline developments on the former Tredegar Park Golf Course need to be monitored carefully so that existing footpaths are not diverted through residential developments.

Pathcare

Members of the committee attended a training session with Matthew Hamar to explore practical and realistic ways of monitoring paths within Newport C.B. and reporting back problems encountered.

The basic idea is to encourage members of our group to adopt a local footpath, walk the adopted path a number of times a year and record problems encountered. Feedback will be given to Matthew Hamar who has agreed to provide maps and simple monitoring sheets.

Any volunteers?

Pentre Farm

The Crown Prosecution Service will not be prosecuting Luke/Hughes for reckless driving. The written statements from our members were not sufficient

RC was not present, but KP noted that RC is using much common sense in selecting which footpath issues to take up and which not to.

Rambles Officer AS was not present

RAMBLES OFFICER'S REPORT

It has been another successful year of walking. Ninety six rambles were organised and they ranged from four mile moonlight strolls to the eighteen mile marathon (nearly) of the Three Castles walk; from walks around Newport to walks as far afield as the Brecon Beacons and Malvern and from gentle strolls with a pub lunch to walks along mountain ridges. All of them were a success, enjoyed by those who took part.

As well as the walks organised within our own group there have been links with other groups, in particular with the West Sussex Ramblers who played host to a group from Newport in the spring. Those who went had a very enjoyable time with spectacular walks over the South Downs and we hope to return their hospitality in the coming year. There have been a number of joint ventures with other local groups, in addition to the area rambles there have been walks with the Lower Wye group and we hope that this type of joint effort will increase. Coach rambles have been less successful this year. These have been enjoyable in the past and will have to be considered for future programmes.

Thanks to all members who have led walks during the year. It is your ideas and your efforts that make the programmes of walks the success that they are. I know it causes a mild panic when you get that request three times a year to come up with a walk but people always come up trumps. There is always a need for walk leaders. We have enough people, just, to share out a four month programme but it often gets a bit tight. If you know anyone who you think might lead for us then please encourage them to come forward. There is a lot of support available, no one will be expected to be an expert before they start.

As well as new leaders there is always a need for suggestions, either new ideas or reminders of things that have worked in the past. If you think there is an area for walks that we have neglected or ignored or if there are particular types of walks that you would like then please make your suggestions known. Do we need more shorter/easier walks or more long ones? Special events such as coach rambles and visits to places of special interest have had mixed support over recent years. Are they still a good idea? More mixed walks that cater for the leisurely walkers and the long walkers are being organised. Do we want more of these? I do get suggestions, I would like even more.

One idea that is currently being discussed is that of more co-operation in organising walks across the Greater Gwent area. This could involve groups sharing leaders, having more combined walks or having an area walks programme. All of these ideas have advantages and drawbacks and the views of all members on these would be welcome.

Also welcome are suggestions on organisation. Is the three month programme the right length? Would walk leaders prefer to be contacted by phone, written to or have both? Is the compiling of a log of group walks a good idea.

I have enjoyed putting the walks programmes together, and look forward to continuing to do so. There is no shortage of possibilities for organising walks and there is always room for improvement. Please let me know about your ideas.

Happy walking in the coming year.

Membership Secretary VC

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

The membership information for our club is supplied by Ray Wensley of G.G.A. We usually have this data on a monthly basis, however Ray's computer has been "unwell" and it has been somewhat restricted recently. It is also sad to note that Ray is not standing for office next year.

S.G.R. membership has remained steady in 2000. We started the year with 169 members and the July 2000 printout shows us as having 163 members. We have had our quota of new members but these have been offset by some members moving out of the area and more upsetting the long term illness and demise of others.

I have continued to send out programmes, brochures and any other pertinent information to those persons requesting details of our group. We discussed the subject of sending reminder letter at a committee meeting and it was agreed to discontinue this practice as we were not really accomplishing anything.

I have received complaints from new members on the length of time it takes the R.A. to process their applications and to forward their membership cards. It also appears the database for members names and addresses are late in being updated, with the result the labels received and used to send out our programmes do not include them. This situation needs to be rectified as soon as possible.

Publicity Secretary KS

Outlets for walks programmes have been topped up regularly and posters distributed, some by FF. **KP will distribute a list of short and evening walks to health centres.** HH noted that Rosemary Butler (Area) had been invited to speak to an engineering club to positive effect.

Election of Officers

The following were proposed by KP, seconded by KS and elected *en bloc* by a vote passed *nem con.* [Do I have to keep *in toto* use of foreign references *de minimus?* - FF] Chairman - KP, Secretary - KP, Treasurer - BW, Membership Secretary - VC, Rambles Officer - Adrian Sheehan (*in absentia* with permission), Publicity Officer - KS, Footpaths Officer - Ray Cantwell (*in absentia* with permission), Committee members - KC, IR, HH and Andrew Willmott (*in absentia* with permission), Group Representatives on Area Council - KC and Adrian Sheehan, Group Nominee for Welsh Council - none. Mr L A Booth was willing to carry on as auditor, health permitting; **the committee will appoint a new auditor if Mr Booth tells us he cannot continue.** In addition a new post of IT Officer was created and occupied by KC. KC has effectively been active in this rôle for some time now, *inter alia* maintaining the Group Web site.

Any other business.

KC reported that he has organised many links back to us from other Web sites. He has emphasised the walks requirements on the site and **will strengthen the site so that footpath problems can be reported.** TS noted that Glamorgan CC had a list of sites: **KC will investigate.**

TS spoke about Welsh matters and RA in general:

He was interested that we had decided to keep the Area level of organisation, since it would have been a nightmare to keep in touch with all the groups otherwise.

They were discussing proposals for a Constitutional Panel and Governors Panel, both in London.

Charity Commission rights have been reinforced.

He noted that the RA is feeling the pinch financially because of the expense of the campaigns during the running of the Countryside Bill.

Good news is that the Liberal democrats now support the Countryside Bill as are the Welsh Nationalists. walking brings money into rural Wales. Evidence from Yorkshire indicates that allocating money to footpath maintenance brings in £57 into the local economy for every £1 spent: visitors support pubs and shops in villages where they may otherwise disappear. The same should hold for Wales. From the top to the bottom the RA should keep up pressure for money for footpath maintenance. FF noted that paths near nationally designated footpaths in some areas of Gwent are falling into disuse and are being blocked with the excuse that there is a designated footpath and the others now do not matter. TS said that we must write to local officials to prevent this from happening. On a similar issue, IR asked if Matthew Hamer's Adopt-a-Path maintenance scheme would concentrate only on paths in Newport CC's pamphlets? FF indicated that Matthew Hamer (Countryside Officer of Newport CC) had used resources up to now merely catching up on a backlog of neglect that he found when he arrived in his job. He was now concentrating on the pamphlet walks to get a scheme going. There was no intention to limit the maintenance only to those paths, but he had to start somewhere.

The committee thanked TS for his coming to the meeting and for his contributions to the RA and to the meeting.

Next Committee Meeting 14 November. Apologies from IR who will be unable to attend on that day.

South Gwent Ramblers

Statement of Accounts Year ending 30 September 2000

	£	£	£
Opening balance 1 October 1999			2021.05
Income			
Allocation from Area - membership	308.24		
Coach Ramble - London	350.00		
Christmas dinner	272.00		
O/D bank charge - refund	12.31		
Interest - bank account	<u>8.60</u>		
		951.15	
Expenditure			
Programme expenses	116.59		
Footpath expenses	14.62		
Publicity expenses	20.90		
Membership expenses	7.81		
Secretary's expenses	72.40		
Christmas dinner	289.40		
Donation to Tenovus [†]	20.00		
Donation to Oxfam [†]	20.00		
Donation to Ramblers Assoc. (Legal Expenses)	100.00		
Coach ramble - London	380.00		
First Aid Course	30.00		
Labels	<u>11.01</u>		
		<u>1082.73</u>	
Excess of income over expenditure			<u>-131.58</u>
Closing balance 30 September 2000			<u>1889.47</u>

[†] *in memoriam* ex-RA members

Balance sheet 30 September 2000

	2000	1999	1998	1997
Monmouthshire BS	1500.00			
Barclays Bank	<u>389.47</u>	<u>2021.05</u>	<u>2608.21</u>	<u>2047.63</u>
	<u>1889.47</u>	<u>2021.05</u>	<u>2608.21</u>	<u>2047.63</u>

B Williams Esq
Treasurer

L A Booth Esq
Auditor

