



South Gwent Ramblers



Minutes of the AGM held on 7 November 2002

Members present - Ken Phillips (KP), Brian Williams (BW), Fred Fee (FF), Val Clark (VC), Kath Sadler (KS), Keith Cooper (KC), Howard Harvey (HH), Margaret Nunn (MN), Linda Westerbury (LW).

KP introduced us to our guest - Laurence Main of the Welsh Council Executive Committee. All present were very disappointed by the poor turnout.

1. *Apologies for absence* from Tessa Perry, Margaret Woodward and Brenda Moses.
2. *Minutes of last meeting* adopted.
3. *Matters arising from the minutes* are included in discussions below.
4. *Chairman's Forward* KP

Another year has gone and I am pleased to say 2002 was a much better year than 2001. The foot and mouth problem was finally put to rest, hopefully not to be repeated.

Work continues on the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill (C.R.O.W.) and remapping is now taking place. The R.A. have also introduced The Right of Way Improvement Plan (R.O.W.I.P). The fact that nearly half the paths in Wales (42%) are difficult or impossible to use needs to be addressed and there are many other areas which need to be looked at. S.G.R. have introduced a Pathcare scheme, with a view to reducing the problem. If you would like to help please contact our Footpaths Officer.

This year as well as thanking all those individuals who give so generously of their time in attending committee meetings and leading our walks, I would also extend my thanks to the Ruperra Trust for their help and my friends Irene and Don Dodd for their input.

5. *Officers' reports*

5.1. *Secretary* KP presented the following report

S.G.R. had a very much better year in 2002 and we were able to revert to our normal activities, this is not to say that we did not enjoy the very different programme brought about by Foot and Mouth last year.

Our social events were many and varied as usual. We commenced our Christmas activities with our Dinner at Newport Golf Club and followed that up with our Christmas walk and lunch at the Huntsman. No snow this year but a very pleasant day.

Last year Brian realised an ambition by visiting Flatholm: this year it was mine with a visit to Caldey Island. We had a guided tour of the island which was very interesting and a boat trip which was even more so.

Our London trip was again led by Irene and Don Dodd. They really do continue to amaze us with the content of their walks. This year we started in Richmond and ended up in Kew Gardens. Once again we visited some lovely buildings and had a very picturesque walk alongside the river. The "train" trip on the Kew Explorer was also well received.

We have continued our link with the Ruperra Conservation Trust and have placed a bench on their estate in memory of those of our members who are no longer with us. The walk to

dedicate the bench was well supported and it is our intention to visit the area at least once during the coming year.

S.G.R. will be 20 years old (young) on 20 September 2003. We are looking at ways to celebrate the event and would appreciate any ideas you might have.

Once again the year has seen us lose some of our most loved and respected members. Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to their families.

5.2. *Treasurer* BW presented the accounts (attached) and reported that

5.2.1. We showed a surplus of £81 over the year.

5.2.2. The current account was moved from Barclays Bank to Unity bank on the last day of the year. Because of the timing, £200 in expenses do not appear in the account. The RA asked for the move. It places all RA Group accounts, more than £2m in total, at the bank which specialises in giving good terms to charities.

5.2.3. BW noted that the RA Holidays advertisement appeared in the SGR Newsletter and RA Holidays paid us for the advert. The coach rambles produced a small profit and the Christmas dinner a small loss, in line with last year.

5.2.4. The membership allocation is roughly the same as last year. The group has twenty more members and so would expect a greater allocation as a result. BW has made the necessary enquiries and is awaiting a satisfactory response.

5.2.5. KP notes that the RA has changed its charitable status to that of a limited liability organisation. Our constitution needs no concomitant change. We are now non-profit-making. Last year's spending on donations helped to balance income. Coach rambles [despite KP's best efforts – FF] made a small profit which is allowable because the rambles attract non-ramblers to the RA.

5.3. *Footpaths Officer* RC was not present

5.4. *Rambles Officer* AS not present

5.5. *Membership Secretary* VC reported:

S.G.R. membership at the end of June 2002 was 179 (now 180) as opposed to 158 at the same time last year, an increase of over 13%. We are the third largest group in our area and our growth since the Foot and Mouth problems has been great to see. Long may it continue.

I have continued to send out programmes, brochures and any other pertinent information to those persons requesting details of our group. Our website appears to be a major player in attracting interest however we still get enquires from people who have seen our adverts in the press and libraries.

We are being asked for a variety of walks as opposed to our normal programme of walks. Walks which cater for young and old. This is a new concept for our group and one that will receive the committee's attention in the next year.

5.6. *Publicity Secretary* KS was publicising SGR in the usual way.

5.7. *IT Officer's report* KC:

Not a very eventful year. The website sits there on the World Wide Web, open for business 24 hours a day and 7 days a week doing most of it for us. I keep it up to date with new walks programmes and late changes, and answer any or at least acknowledge requests for information within two days: these come mostly from the UK but I have had e-mails from New York, USA and Austria asking about us.

I understand from other officers that our website is a proven asset for attracting interest and new members to our group: this is what makes it worthwhile. The software provided by SGR has made the job of managing and keeping the website up to date much easier.

I am an active member of the Ramblers Net, which I find an interesting insight into the RA and other groups and areas. When I find something that I think may be of interest to other officers or members, I pass it on.

Following the sad and unexpected death of Ray Wensley I have taken over the construction and operation of the Greater Gwent Area Website.

KC added that the web site is proving good at attracting new members and exotic guests (enquiries from USA and Austria).

6. *Election of Officers.*

Except for Andrew who stands down, all the committee agreed to continue. KP wondered what could be done to get people interested in rambling. KC said that a thread on the net stressed the importance of new blood arriving to replace older members as a Group aged. HH thought that people were scared of the length of the walks.

7. *Area Council* delegates from the Group are KC and Adrian Sheehan. Adrian also serves on the Area Committee.

8. *Welsh Council* – no volunteers

9. *Auditor* – Mr Booth will continue.

10. *In which way can the Group improve?*

10.1. MN and LW liked the walks programme as it was. They noted that some evening walks, particularly after the start of August, ended in the dark: they would prefer to end walks before dark.

10.2. KC noted that some evening walks are not suitable for unfit folk, as reported on the web site. He said that there was a place for starter walks.

10.3. KP has reconnoitred the Severn Bore trip and it worked well. MN and LW liked the idea provided that transport could be arranged.

10.4. KC noted that the RA wanted us to use public transport. One of our strong points is that we meet before walks in the city centre.

10.5. Laurence Main said that RA is not a motoring organisation. He campaigned for ten years for the one bus a day that now graces his home village in Gwynedd. He strives to lead linear walks which make use of the bus. He urged us to support local buses. A lively discussion about using public transport ensued. At some stage someone suggested using the train to get to Abergavenny. Sandra Cocksedge suggested a weekend away to KP: the idea appealed to MN and LW. Laurence said that the Isle of Wight makes for

excellent walking and 90% of its paths are unobstructed. The train to Portsmouth provides ready access.

11. *A Walks Meeting* to discuss the walks programme will take place at the Oak Stave, Rogerstone on 11 November, attended by Adrian Sheehan. KC noted that we may end up with an unbalanced programme, because there is a shortage of leaders and Adrian has to take any walks offered: he pleaded for anyone with a walk to come forward. HH asked if it was feasible to lead an evening walk on a day other than Wednesday. A chorused answer of “Yes!” was immediately heard.
12. *Supporting Ramblers* Laurence noted the Leader exchange scheme. KP gets copies of other Groups’ programmes. The committee and others could go on other Groups’ walks with an eye on expanding our repertoire. Also, special interest walks leaders could be available to all Groups. KP noted that Val Evans *et al* had restarted stiles work on our patch.
13. *Is this the best format for the AGM?* KP said that the atmosphere was too dry. Laurence asked if we had tried an AGM with a walk? He organises a 10:30 to 12 AGM followed by lunch and a themed walk. KC said that we have a walk before the Area AGM. Laurence thought it best to have the AGM then the walk – and (tongue-in-cheek) not to say how long the AGM would last!

14. *Any Other Business*

- 14.1. Sweatshirts were on order and will be delivered in January.
- 14.2. 28 are going to the ceilidh.
- 14.3. KP put forward a point raised by Tessa Perry. She liked the Newsletter, but felt that the long walkers were under-represented. KP thinks that we are one Group and would not like to see the Group split into factions. Tessa asked if anyone could contribute and the answer of course is “Yes”. Tessa also noted that she is writing an article about rambling for the local newspaper.
- 14.4. KC put forward an appeal on behalf of the area. The Area want to encourage and assist, to coordinate and help. In particular they want to inaugurate a walking committee to generate interest in walking. The committees in general needed ideas and you don’t have to be on a committee to put forward ideas.
- 14.5. KP suggested afternoon walks to spur interest.

15. *Postscript* KP invited Laurence to end the meeting by saying a few words:

Rambling is about the outdoors and the spiritual, about mental and physical wellbeing. Try to look at the paper-work and meetings as a side line to the main walking activity.

Ramblers could do away with Areas with Wales as one big area – devolution in action. One quarterly magazine should contain details of all walks in Wales!

This report can’t do justice to Laurence’s inspirational presentation and presence throughout, although a mention of his ruddy outdoor complexion set off by long white hair and full-set, together with a youngster’s gait may help. In summarising, I cannot begin to realise Laurence’s stirring, heartfelt and heart-warming delivery.

South Gwent Ramblers

Statement of Accounts Year ending 30 September 2002

	£	£	£
Opening balance 1 October 2001			<u>1467.11</u>
Income			
RA Holidays advertisement	40.00		
Allocation from Area — membership	306.61		
Allocation from Area — Newsletter	37.82		
Christmas dinner	360.50		
Refund — Computer Equipment	11.47		
Coach Rambles — London and Caldey	1244.82		
Interest — Bank account	0.97		
Interest — Building Society account	17.19		
Building Society/Bank transfer	<u>1389.73</u>		
		<u>3409.11</u>	
Expenditure			
Secretary's expense	62.42		
Area Newsletter	31.96		
Christmas dinner	370.41		
Computer Equipment	67.23		
Coach rambles — London and Caldey	1227.90		
Subscription to Ruperra Conservation Trust	20.00		
Wooden bench for Ruperra Conservation Trust	158.00		
Building Society/Bank transfer	<u>1389.73</u>		
		<u>3327.65</u>	
Excess of income over expenditure			<u>81.46</u>
Closing balance 30 September 2002			<u>1548.57</u>

Balance sheet 30 September 2002

	2002	2001	2000	1999
Monmouthshire BS	-	1372.54	1500.00	-
Barclays Bank	-	94.57	389.47	2021.05
Unity Bank	<u>1548.57</u>	-	-	-
	<u>1548.57</u>	<u>1467.11</u>	<u>1889.47</u>	<u>2021.05</u>

B Williams Esq
Treasurer

L A Booth Esq
Auditor

13 October 2002