



# South Gwent Ramblers



## Minutes of the AGM held on 25 November 2004

*Members present* – Fred Fee, Maureen Fee, Keith Cooper, Brian Williams, Ian Reese, Ted Clevely, John Durbin, Margaret Nunn, Linda Westerberg, Kath Carter, Ken Phillips, Val Clark, Howard Harvey, John Campbell, Jan Wagner, Alun Booth, Lorraine Bird, Lorna Hall, Adrian Sheehan, Mary Raymond, Christine Platteeuw.

1. *Apologies for absence* from Kath Sadler.
2. *Minutes of last meeting* adopted, proposer Margaret Nunn, seconder Kath Carter .
3. *Matters arising from the minutes*
  - 3.1. It is now one year since the shock of John Ridley's death. A commemorative walk to place a plaque in his honour was well attended.
  - 3.2. Two Map and Compass evenings presented by Ian Reese were well attended and the practical will take place on 28 November.
  - 3.3. A slide show presented by Fred Fee in the council chamber was well-attended despite appalling weather on the night.
  - 3.4. Re activities proposed last year, we could not repeat the barbeque because the venue was unavailable and there was no suitable Severn Bore during the year! There was no enthusiasm for attending the Royal Welsh Show. However, we did visit Margam Park, have lunch at the Goose and Cuckoo, visited Budleigh Salterton by coach and spent another great weekend at Paignton. Ken's bowls club declined to have another ceilidh. Thanks to Ken for being the driving force behind much of this activity.

#### 4. *Chairman's Forward*

Our group continues to flourish. Once again we have compiled a varied programme of walks, and my thanks to all those members who contributed to it's success. This also applies to our Slide Show Evening and Map & Compass Night.

The R.A. have also had a busy year, The Countryside Rights of Way act is due to be implemented in Wales during 2005, and whilst dealing with the complexities of the bill they have found time to relocate from North to South Wales.

The Greater Gwent Area committee continue their good work and we wish them every success with their Strategic Framework Project.

**However to achieve results at both Area and Group level, volunteers are needed urgently. Please, stop and think for a moment what would happen if your current committee decided to call it a day!! No more walks, no more social events and no footpaths to walk on. If you want to help, please contact a committee member.**

#### 5. *Officers' reports*

##### 5.1. *Secretary* Ken Phillips reported:

The attendance at last year's AGM was an improvement on 2002; however, as my teacher used to write on my report, "Could Do Better". This year we have the added attraction of a slide show, so will my teacher be happy this year?!!

No London trip this year, but what a substitute we had in the coach trip to Budleigh Salterton. Excellent walk, food and weather. What more could you ask for? Our Christmas Dinner and Christmas walk were once again well supported and enjoyed by all.

We have continued to support the Ruperra Trust and a few of our members are continuing to do sterling work on the pathways and stiles in our area. Our Pathcare scheme is still operational and we try and answer as many footpath problems as we can. This is difficult as we do not have a Footpath Officer. If you can help in any way please contact me and I will do my best to point you in the right direction.

5.2. *Treasurer* Brian Williams presented notes on the accounts (attached below). The reason for the drop of £500 in hand is due largely to expenses carried over from last year (the barbeque, events *in memoriam* John Ridley) and to a conscious decision to allow the funds in hand to lessen because they were greater than needed. Ian Reese noted that a group to which he belonged encountered difficulties when funds were allowed to dip too low for contingencies which arose. Brian assured us that our funds remain more than enough for contingencies. The accounts were adopted, proposer Keith Cooper, seconder Mary Raymond.

5.3. *Footpaths Officer* Fred Fee took responsibility for dealing with footpaths correspondence part-way through the year. Full time work and the occasional daytime look at proposed footpath routes don't mix. It would be nice if a more suitable candidate came forward for the job. Most of the correspondence demands little response and there were no major issues since Fred took over. Fred showed the meeting a typical short note from Newport city Council for a request for a minor footpath diversion where he had viewed the land and reported no problems to the Council.

5.4. *Rambles Officer* Adrian Sheehan reported:

In the past year we have put on a tremendous programme of walks. There have been over ninety events and the range of activity has been enough to satisfy every type of walker and to let people experience the wealth of walking opportunities that exist in this area. There have been 14 mile walks over the Beacons and short strolls along local canals. We have covered the area from the Gower to the countryside around Bath, from Glasbury down to the Glamorgan coast. Some of the local long distance paths have been walked in stages, the Sirhowy Valley and the Usk Valley paths in particular. We have had trips to the South Coast; walks with a meal, walks with other groups, linear walks, long, leisurely and evening walks. This is a superb range of activity for a group of our size and thanks are due to all those who organised and led the walks. The success of the programme is due to them.

There have been some new walk leaders this year. New leaders are welcome. We need to keep up the number of leaders to maintain our programme. A good feature of this Group is that the leadership of our walks is spread among a lot of people. This spreads the load and it also brings in new ideas. Even areas we have walked regularly in the past can be a real pleasure to walk with a new leader bringing a fresh perspective. If you would like to lead a walk please do come forward. You will get all of the support and training you need. Many of our experienced leaders will be only too pleased to go with you to plan and help lead your first walks. You will also see map and compass events which will help in bringing your skills up to scratch.

If you don't like the idea of leading but you have suggestions for walks these are also welcome. Suggestions can be made to me or to any other leader and we can then think about incorporating them into a programme.

All of the walks in the programme have a description indicating the area of the walk and the level of difficulty. These descriptors will be changing to bring us into line with a set of

descriptors that are being used nationally. This is being done because members are increasingly walking with other groups and groups are sharing programmes to a greater extent. Also, programmes are going on to the internet where they can be accessed by members across the country.

The existing descriptors are Long A, B, or C followed by a distance (with the letter indicating the height climbed), Leisurely or Evening. The new descriptors are as follows:

**Easy Access Walks** for everyone, including people with conventional wheelchairs and pushchairs, using easy access paths. Comfortable shoes or trainers can be worn. Assistance may be needed to push wheelchairs on some sections.

**Easy Walks** for anyone who does not have a mobility difficulty or a specific health problem or is seriously unfit Suitable for pushchairs if they can be lifted over occasional obstructions. Comfortable shoes or trainers can be worn.

**Leisurely Walks** for reasonably fit people with at least a little country walking experience. May include unsurfaced rural paths. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are recommended.

**Moderate Walks** for people with country walking experience and a good level of fitness. May include some steep paths and open country. Walking boots and warm, water roof clothing are essential.

**Strenuous Walks** for experienced country walkers with an above average fitness level. May include hills and rough country. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are essential. People in doubt about their fitness are advised to contact the organiser or leader in advance.

**Technical Walks** for experienced and very fit walkers with additional technical skills. May require scrambling and use of ropes, ice axes and crampons. You must contact the organiser or leader in advance for further details.

For a while we will use both sets of descriptors until we are comfortable using the new ones. If you have any views on the descriptors please let me know.

I am sure we are going to have another successful year of walking. Thank you to everyone for the support you have given as a walker as well as a leader. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on walks in the coming year!

#### 5.5. *Membership Secretary* Val Clark reported the figures:

Oct03	Nov03	Dec03	Jan04	Feb04	Mar04	Apr04	May04	Jun04	Jul04	Aug04	Sep04
195	196	194	199	202	201	203	202	200	199	197	199

As you can see our membership has been constant throughout the year. This only represents a 2.05% increase over 2003, and falls behind the overall Area increase of 5.45%.

We have had our share of new memberships, but have lost an equal number to people moving out of the area or deciding not to renew their membership. I would remind potential new members to state that they wish to become members of SGR on their application form, otherwise they will be allocated by their postcode.

#### 5.6. *Publicity Secretary* Kath Sadler sent this report to the meeting:

Our website has become a major contributor in our publicity campaigns. However I have continued to place details of our walks in the local paper and delivered a supply of programmes to the local libraries and outdoor pursuit shops.

We have continued to use the main library in John Frost Square for our displays of

photographs and R.A. literature. Our thanks to them for their help and co-operation

Once again I will take this opportunity of asking our members if they can help in distributing our publicity material to their local areas, please give our secretary a ring.

In addition Fred Fee placed 100 copies of the Winter walks programme in the library.

5.7. *IT Officer's report* Keith Cooper showed a graph of the number of hits the SGR site has received during the year and the trend was encouraging.

6. *Election of Officers.* The committee was elected as follows:

Chairman	Ken Phillips
Secretary	Ken Phillips
Auditor	Alun Booth
Treasurer	Brian Williams
Rambles	Adrian Sheehan with Alun Booth organising the walking wounded walks
IT Officer	Keith Cooper
Membership	Val Clark
Footpaths	Fred Fee
Publicity	Kath Sadler
Committee	Ian Reese, Ted Cleverly, Kath Carter, Howard Harvey, Christine Platteeuw and Lorraine Bird

Thanks to all the new volunteers!

7. *Area Council* delegates from the Group were Keith Cooper and Adrian Sheehan, but Keith can no longer continue. Adrian also serves on the Area Committee.

*Welsh Council* – no volunteers!

8. *Proposed activities for 2005*

8.1. *London coach trip* Ken liaised with Irene who is working on a guided walk in the Windsor area.

8.2. *Rhossili coach trip* a possibility lead by Ken

8.3. *Weekend away* Ken has made a provisional booking for Paignton at the same time of the year as last: the hotel fills so quickly that it is essential to do so. Whether we go there or elsewhere is open to discussion.

8.4. *Severn bore / Gloucester docks or Slimbridge* Hopefully the Severn will oblige this year.

8.5. *Barbeque* We will ask the Collard's and try to fix a date.

8.6. *Boat trip* Some of the leisurely walkers went last year. Do we want an official trip this year?

8.7. *The Hidden Garden* another possibility

8.8. *Dales walk* Fred will ask Linda about the possibility of her leading a couple of walks near her Northern abode.

8.9. *Coastal walk* Ian would like to explore a possible coastal walk, maybe in Devon.