



South Gwent Ramblers



Minutes of the AGM held on
16 November 2008 at Llanishen Village Hall

Members present - Ken Phillips, Doug Cocksedge, Kath Carter, Val Clark, Julie Hepburn, John Smith, Margaret Nun, Paul Coleman, Taha Lazam, John Kingdom, Sid Carmel, Richard Atack, Christine Bryan, Mary Raymond, Diana Osman, Sandra Cocksedge, John Blakemore, Diane Blakemore, Christine Platteeuw, Brian Williams, Gill Griffin, Fred Fee, Paul Mellor, Dave Fereday, Lorna Hall, Helen Elliott, Peter Elliott, Maureen Fee, Edward Clevely.

1. *Apologies for absence* from Derek Humble, Adrian Sheehan, Brian Turner, Kath and Ray Cantwell and Linda Westerberg.

2. *Chairman's welcome*

Welcome to our AGM and something new this year as we are sitting in Llanishen Village Hall rather than the Civic Centre in Newport.

Last year I asked for two new committee members and Julie Hepburn and Brian Turner volunteered. Thanks to you both. I understand that all our existing committee are prepared to continue this coming year, however if anyone else would like to join us they will be more than welcome. 2007/08 has not been the best year for a few of our walkers but in true ramblers fashion they have battled through. Let's hope we all enjoy good health this coming year. My thanks as per usual to my fellow officers and all who help keep our group going.

Thanks to Diana Osman, for organising use of the hall, to Ken Phillips, and Val Clark for help in organising the event and to Kath Carter for organising the refreshments.

3. *Minutes of last meeting* were adopted

4. *Matters arising from the minutes*

4.1. We need a revised constitution mainly because the RA is now a Limited Liability Company. Nothing has yet been done.

4.2. There was a limited response to the suggestion that we obtain newsweatshirts. We will not proceed with an order since the minimum order number is unlikely to be breached.

4.3. Lower Wye and Iswyn Group walks publications have been obtained and are available for use by members. Brian Williams holds them.

4.4. We abided by the decision to hold the AGM at a new venue.

5. *Officers' reports*

5.1. *Secretary* Ken Phillips

A good year by all standards, SGR and the RA have achieved many things this year and will continue to do so.

We have continued our support for the Gwent Association for the Blind (GAB) by leading walks for them. We once again arranged their annual outing by taking them on a trip to Margam Park. If any of our members would like to attend these days out or would like to help in any way please contact me.

The Ruperra Trust continues to have problems with the owner of Ruperra Castle and we have been supportive of the Trusts aims to stop residential houses being built on the site. The original planning permission was rejected, however the owner has now appealed against the decision and an inquiry will be held in 2009.

The R.A. are keen to introduce their Stepping Stones programme. We have had several discussions with them and the local Council on the implications of introducing these walks, which are based on being local, on a bus route and what we describe as Easy. It appears that our evening walks are too difficult. If anyone is interested in getting involved please give me a ring and I will be pleased to give you more information.

Our social events have all proved a success again this year. Our Christmas Dinner and Christmas Walk/Lunch were very well supported despite the atrocious weather. Two coach trips, two skittles evenings, two slide shows and two weekends away made for a very comprehensive social calendar. We hope to do the same this coming year and if you have any ideas to supplement them please let me know.

Finally let me thank those members who keep our paths open and walkable. I refer to those members who give of their time to maintain our footpaths and styles.

Ken noted that Julie Hepburn had resigned because of work commitments.

We currently need volunteers for the Gwent Association for the Blind: please let Ken know if you are interested.

Many thanks to Derek Humble and all the other volunteers who help install styles bridges etc and maintaining accessibility of the footpath system.

5.2. *Treasurer* Brian Williams present the accounts (attached to end of minutes).

The funding of the Group by the Ramblers Association, based on a budget assessment, is now in its second year and running smoothly. The previous basis, dependent on the number of members, was difficult to fund equably amongst the Groups in the Area.

We continue to fund expenses for those walk leaders incurring costs in pre walking their routes. An allowance for this item is included in our budget, it is your entitlement, so please do not hesitate to claim. The Ramblers Association take this factor into their calculations when deciding on the amount to be charged for the annual subscription.

All social events and coach trips costs have been virtually covered by the amounts levied prior to the occasion.

Brian explained the statement and, briefly, the new budgetary system that has been agreed between groups and the RA.

The budget for this year has been accepted by the Great Gwent Area.

5.3. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble was absent and his report (below) was accepted

The past year has seen a many items to consider and comment on.

There have been a number of path extinguishments, diversions and proposed developments dose to rights of way. Most of the cases required little or no action on

our behalf, and several of the diversions will prove to be of benefit in years to come. There are a few diversions in the pipeline which will make for easier routes where the paths will be removed from household curtilages into open fields.

The major realignment of paths around Berryhill Farm has been completed, and the local volunteer group has put in new stiles, a bridge and hung several farm gates which incorporate a walkers gate to aid easy access when the farm gate is locked.

My comments to Newport City Council regarding the improvements on Catsash Road for the Ryder Cup to make for safer pedestrian passage along the Usk Valley Walk which goes along this road, fell on deaf ears. The road was only nominally improved, resurfaced and vegetation cut back. There still no provision for walkers.

The proposed diversion at Cefn Henllan, Llangibby still hasn't been resolved, but at least it hasn't been granted.

Our objections to a diversion at Pencoed, and one at Coedkemew have been upheld, thereby maintaining pleasant meadow paths.

I have received a few complaints of path problems in Torfaen, Newport and Monmouthshire council areas from members of the public via our website and these have been reported and some of them cleared.

Negotiations with Arup, the new M4 agents, are on-going to maintain the best possible

access for footpath users around Coedkernew, the of a major intersection.

Green lanes are in the process of being opened up close to the Severn Estuary in readiness for the proposed coastal footpath.

Plans have been submitted for a huge coach park just to the west of Catsash House for spectators attending major events at the Celtic Manor Golf Club. As nearby footpaths will probably be subject to temporary closures on such occasions, this should not otherwise affect us.

5.4. *Rambles Officer* Christine Platteeuw

It is that time of the year again, when the Chairman urges me to provide a copy of the Rambles Officer Report Is it really? It feels like only a little while ago since I was reminiscing over the 2006-2007 walks and already 12 months have gone by. I have to look back into our programmes to refresh my mind. Where have we walked? How often have we met? Ah, do they not look smart and colourful, our programmes? My sincere thanks to you Fred for your artistic contribution in getting these designed, printed, addressed and delivered to our members on time, despite unruly macros and rebellious printers.

So where have we walked and how often have we met? Well, this year, we not only visited our own beloved Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons and Glamorgan Coast but also had a few enjoyable outings abroad Thanks to Paul Mellor who has shown great keenness and passion for leading walks, we saw a bit more of neighbouring country, England, and thanks to Fred Fee who took us just a little further away to introduce us to the mighty mountains of Scotland. Keep up the good work Paul and Fred. It is much appreciated.

A rigorous count of our walks reveals 81 from the beginning of November 2007 until the end October 2008. A good selection offered by our committed and dedicated walks leaders. My thanks to everyone who took up the responsibility of leading one or more walks in this year's programme. We sometimes take it for granted, when going on a walk, that there is a walk leader. Of course, otherwise there would not be a walk It is good, however, to always remember for a moment and think about the

effort that has been put in by the walk leader to identify, plan and pre-walk a walk for us, so it becomes the enjoyable experience we hope for.

We had a good crowd of 3 new walk leaders last year and I'm happy to see that they continued with their commendable initiative this year, Unfortunately, we had no new leaders this year and we even had a few people who had to abandon leading due to personal circumstances, I hope we will see you back in the new walking year. And as always, of course, it is my duty as a Rambles Officer, to lobby for new walk leaders. At the risk of repeating myself: "Walk leaders are at the heart of our group." We need you. And the more people that can help us out with this mission, the better, If it seems a daunting task, then try partnering with a friend or experienced leader. You do not have to single lead walks, Doing it with a buddy is a lot less scary and very enjoyable, Think about it. Please ... Although it takes a bit of organising, it is rewarding in the end. I know from experience.

The 2007-2008 programme offered a nice range of walks with varying grades of difficulty, from the very easy over short distances and flat terrains to the moderate for people with a good level of fitness and the longer, strenuous walks at a more brisk pace for those with above average fitness, Last year we had, out of the 81:

27 walks (33%) classed as 'Leisurely/Easy'

37 (46%) classed as 'Moderate'

17 (21%) classed as 'Strenuous',

Note however that these grades are provided as a general guide only, probably on the side of caution. If interested in participating in a walk but in doubt about whether it would be suitable for you, contact the walk leader in advance: ask for more details on the terrain, ascents and descents to be walked. It will give you a more accurate idea versus your own level of fitness,

It has been another successful walking year in which we again have been able to enjoy a lot of our local natural beauty. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on our walks in the coming year.

5.5. Membership Secretary Val Clark

According to figures received from RA Head Office, SGR's membership is the same in September 2008 as it was at the same time last year. Greater Gwent's membership appears to have dropped by 21.

However, the R.A. have attempted to change their computer system and our membership information has contained some major inconsistencies during the year, so the accuracy is open to question. They assure us all will be well by Christmas, however they didn't say which Christmas!!!

We will continue our efforts to reach our goal of 200+ in 2009.

5.6. Publicity Secretary Fred Fee

This was a quiet year. Newsletters, programmes and any other SGR paraphernalia are printed in-house, then folded and distributed by myself and Maureen with help from Ken. Adrian and Brian. I distribute bundles of programmes to Newport, Caerphilly and Abergavenny Tourist Information Offices. The list of bureaucracies that receive programmes electronically has increased slightly.

I received lots of Ramblers Association membership forms and will interleave them with programmes intended for the Tourist Information Offices when the next programme is issued.

Interest from the Newport City Council "Going for Gold" initiative has been non-existent. Adrian and I made it clear at the meetings we attended that we would be happy to receive referrals from several organisations when their walking members felt fit enough to benefit from our walks. They sent us not a single referral and I get the impression that their walking members are happy not to advance their fitness to the levels needed even for our short walks and that their leaders are content with this state of affairs. Still, we tried.

Ken and I attended the inauguration of the Newport Wetlands Centre. As a result, a new bureaucracy was added to those receiving our programmes by email. We met a visitors' guide who indicated that he would be happy to lead a private guided tour of the Wetlands one Thursday evening for the SGR. The guided tour formed an interesting short walk in the last walks programme and was well attended.

High visibility vests are available for leaders and back-markers. Fred and Ken keep them in the boots of their cars.

Fred added that he had received hundreds of membership leaflets which will be distributed with the walks programmes to Tourist Information Offices.

6. *IT Officer's report* Keith Cooper. Keith was once again absent. Fred will get in touch with Keith about updating the web site with the walks in the walks programme beginning December 2008.

7. *Election of Officers to the Committee* Ted Clevely resigned and the following were elected:

Chairman - Ken Phillips

Secretary - Ken Phillips

Auditor - Alun Booth

Treasurer - Brian Williams

Rambles Officer - Christine Plateeuw

IT Officer - Keith Cooper

Membership Secretary - Val Clark

Footpath Officer - Derek Humble

Publicity Officer - Fred Fee

Minutes Secretary - Fred Fee

Area Representatives - Adrian sheehan, Fred Fee

8. *Proposed activities for 2008*

8.1. **Two skittles evenings**: one in Spring and one in Autumn.

8.2. **Two day trips**: one to Minehead featuring a walk with a rail trip organised by Ian Reese and another organised by Christine Bryan.

8.3. **A barbecue**: Diana Osman suggested a site at the Old Station, Tintern and Ken Phillipd will reconoitre; Ted will investigate a site a Aberglasny.

8.4. Last year's the trip to see the **Severn Bore** was abandoned last year because there was not a bore high enough to warrant the trip. Ken will investigate a trip this year.

8.5. Ken will investigate a return to **Dewstow Grottos** and a possible visit to Westonbirt Arboretum.

8.6. Dave Fereday will organise a weekend or a week away to the **Cairngorms**.

8.7. Ken has investigated a weekend to **Falmouth**. The cheapest quote he obtained for hotels in Falmouth was £57pppn. Ken suggested that we return to the Esplanade, Newquay and use that hotel as a centre for walking in the Falmouth area and

suggested a visit to St Michael's Mount. He will liaise with Dinah Wallis and Dave Fereday about walks.

8.8. Christine Bryan suggested a **bowls competition** one Saturday at Belle View Park or Whiteheads and will investigate.

8.9. AOB

Peter Elliott noted that attendance at slide shows has gone down over the years and suggested having an evening slide show at the hotel on the weekend away to general approval.

Finally, Ken thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the meeting.

South Gwent Ramblers

Statement of Accounts Year ending 30 September 2008

	£	£	£
Opening balance 1 October 2007			<u>1535.40</u>
Income			
Christmas dinner	475.30		
RA Holidays advertisements	100.00		
Allocation from Area — Membership	776.00		
Coach ramble — Bristol	280.00		
Coach ramble — Rhossili	250.00		
Newquay weekend deposit refund	200.00		
Interest — Unity bank	<u>56.44</u>		
		<u>1937.74</u>	
Expenditure			
Christmas dinner	483.00		
Coach Ramble — Bristol	280.00		
Coach Ramble — Rhossili	250.00		
RA Charitable Objectives			
Footpaths	0.00		
Countryside protection	0.00		
Access	25.00		
Promoting walking			
Administration/Publicity	575.35		
Pre-walk expenses	<u>617.88</u>		
	<u>1193.23</u>		
		<u>2231.23</u>	
Excess of expenditure over income			<u>293.49</u>
Closing balance 30 September 2008			<u>1241.91</u>

B Williams Esq
Treasurer

T A L Booth Esq
Auditor

5 October 2008