



South Gwent Ramblers



Minutes of the AGM meeting held on
8 November 2009 at Llanishen Village Hall

Members present - Kath Carter, Maureen Fee, Linda Westerberg, Margaret Nunn, Mary Raymond, Jean Butt, Arthur Butt, Sidney Carnell, Dave Fereday, Christine Platteeuw, Richard Atack, Andrew Thomas, Helen Elliott, Peter Elliott, David Page, Colin Wallace, Ted Clevely, John Kingdom, Derek Humble, Anna Hughes, Fred Fee, Denise Humble, Paul Coleman, Ken Phillips, Val Clark, Diana Osman, Brian Williams, Ted Hughes.

1. *Apologies for absence* from Adrian Sheehan and Lorna Hall.

2. *Chairman's foreword* Ken Phillips

Welcome to our AGM at Llanishen Village Hall once again. Last year was such a success we thought "let's give it another go this year". My thanks to Diana for booking the venue and leading the walk again this year, to Kath for organising the catering and to Val for her help on the day. What would we do without them.

2008/09 has once again not been best year for a few of our walkers but in true ramblers fashion they have battled through. Let's hope they enjoy better health this coming year.

The Ramblers Association is not in the best of health at the moment and with their 75th Anniversary coming up in June 2010 let us hope things improve soon.

I will finish as I always do by expressing my thanks to our committee and walks leaders for giving their time and expertise for the benefit of our group.

3. *Minutes of last meeting* were adopted

4. *Matters arising from the minutes*

4.1. *Re item 4.1* Adrian still has to look at the constitution.

4.2. *Re items 8.3, 8.5 and 8.8* none of the proposed activities were followed.

5. *Officers' reports*

5.1. *Secretary* Ken Phillips

2008/9 was a good year for South Gwent Ramblers. However, it did have it's mishaps: ask John Kingdom!! It was the first time we had to call on the services of the Air Ambulance and they did us proud.

We have continued our support of the Ruperra Trust in their quest to stop the owner of the castle from building executive housing on the site. The owner appealed against an earlier decision to deny their application and a further hearing was held. There had been no decision reached as at the 30 September.

The Gwent Association for the Blind (GAB) have recently advised that all walks leaders and helpers have to be CRB vetted. This I feel will make it much harder for them to recruit volunteers. We will, however, continue with our support for such a deserving cause.

The RA have finally realised that their rules and regulations for holding Stepping Stone Walks were impractical and Groups will find it much easier to find the necessary leaders.

Our social events have been many and varied. We revisited the Dewstow Grottoes earlier in the year and enjoyed a lovely walk around the gardens, which was followed by refreshments and a chinwag up at the Golf Club. Our revisit to see the Severn Bore was a little disappointing. Billed as a 4 Star Bore, I think a 2 Star was all it was worth. However, we had an excellent walk along the riverbank and made it all worthwhile.

As always let me thank those members who give of their time and energies to maintain our stiles and footpaths.

- 5.2. **Treasurer** Brian Williams presented (a) the budget for 2009/10 to be referred to the Ramblers Association and (b) the Treasurer's report:

South Gwent Ramblers Budget 2009/2010

!	!	!	£
Opening Balance @ 30/09/09!	!		1,025.00
R.A.Charitable Objectives:!	£		
Footpaths !.....	0.00		
Access !.....	25.00		
Countryside !.....	0.00		
Promoting walking:			
Admin/Publicity!.....	880.00 *		
Pre-walk Expenses !.....	<u>386.00</u>		
!	!	!	<u>1,291.00</u>
Balance - Excess of Expenditure over income!			<u>266.00</u>

To meet the above anticipated costs and retain a working balance of £1,000 annually, we request the budget allowance for the forthcoming year be set at £1,266.

* N.B. We incurred a one off payment in the year for a printer @ £291 which has been deducted from the normal running costs.

South Gwent Ramblers Treasurer's report

This last year has been a turbulent time for the Ramblers Association nation wide. Due to the credit crunch, the association has requested draft accounts from Groups, prior to the financial year end in September. The situation which was revealed meant that here in Wales, there was a threat that the Cardiff RA branch had to be closed forthwith.

We have been requested to make savings of 25% on our expenditure, which will be one of the subjects for our next committee meeting.

I have submitted a budget assessment for the coming year, based on previous costings, and await to hear if it will be honoured.

- 5.2.1. In addition to the Treasurer's report [which was appended to the agenda of the meeting], some new events have to be reported. The Ramblers Association (RA) is turning the corner financially: following redundancies in Cardiff and a threat to the existence of the Cardiff Office, awards of more funds have allowed some staff have been retained. The 25% reduction our Group had been told was necessary in our budget figures has now been increased to 35.4%. However, the Area Treasurer has asked that this amount be reconsidered. Notwithstanding, South Gwent has receive 50% of out proposed budget to cover the first half of the year: presumably we will receive a lot less for the second half. This all indicates we will need to watch our expenditure closely in order to balance the books.
- 5.2.2. Ken Phillips noted that the RA should be back on kilter next year. Ted Hughes asked whether the credit crunch was to blame for the RA pecuniary problems. Ken replied that it was not directly to blame: there had been a massive drop in legacies and a smaller drop in membership.
- 5.2.3. Kath Carter asked if the RA published a financial report and if it were available. Ken Phillips replied that it was available and that he had a copy. Fred Fee noted that a lot of data previously only available to committee members in the RA hierarchy is now available to all members at the RA site.
- 5.2.4. Dave Fereday wondered if the RA was becoming too political. Ken said he felt that it had become a little too political, but more so it had perhaps overstretched itself, trying to cover too many bases within a limited income.
- 5.2.5. Peter Elliott noticed that our accounts revealed two main areas of expenditure: pre-walk expenses and publicity. Ken Phillips agreed and said that we would try to work out how to lessen both. Dave Fereday noted the one-off payment for the printer which would not recur next year.
- 5.2.6. Ken Phillips reminded the meeting of the use of the Air Ambulance to lift an injured John Kingdom from a mountain earlier this year. We contributed £50 to the Air Ambulance as a result. Ken thought that we should contribute £50 each year, since we never know if we will need it again. The meeting agreed that we should do so.

5.2.7. The accounts were accepted and are appended to the end of these minutes.

5.3. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble

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

There has been a large number of path diversions and proposed developments close to rights of way. Most of the cases required little or no action on our behalf, but some will be of benefit for the future due to ease of use and navigation.

A number of footpaths have been diverted back to their correct positions, having been surreptitiously altered over a period of years. This exercise has been carried out under the 'Rights of Way Improvement Programme', funded by the Welsh Assembly.

There are many diversions pending and a backlog of applications exists.

The Old Iron Bridge at Draethen, presently in store in Newport, is awaiting repair and refurbishment by a specialist contractor. The associated river training work and bridge abutment rebuilding has been successfully carried out at great cost.

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

Some progress has been made in rerouting a footpath in Celtic Manor to avoid the 18th fairway on the 2010 course.

The motorway relief road around Newport has been abandoned for the foreseeable future so making a number of our paths safe at least for the time being.

Funding has been promised by the Welsh Assembly for alterations to two paths bisected by the A449 near the Coldra when it was constructed in the 1970's. The routes have been unusable for the last few years and eventually there should be a new figure of eight system connecting Langstone to the Celtic Manor grounds.

Major remodelling of paths around Clearwell Farm at Michaelstone has been completed, much of the infrastructure was altered by the volunteer group, who are busy maintaining routes contained in Newport City Council's walks leaflets. These are now available from Civic Centre or public libraries.

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

5.3.1. Derek brought to the meeting copies of a series of walks leaflets recently introduced by Newport City Council.

5.4. *Rambles Officer* Christine Platteeuw

With the input from our walk leaders, we published 3 well filled programmes, each covering the walks on offer for the following 4 months ahead.

The walk leaders volunteered a combined total of 85 walks between beginning of November 2008 and end of October 2009, ranging from the easy/leisurely walks for beginners or people who prefer the shorter distances and easier terrain, to the strenuous walks for the more experienced. During the summer months, we also offered walks on Wednesday evenings in addition to the regular Sunday daytime walks.

Total distance covered was about 677 miles.

Out of the 85, we advertised 42 'Short' and 43 'Long' walks.

Each walk was graded according to its difficulty, with the majority rated as moderate:

- 'Leisurely/Easy' walks: 17 (20%)
- 'Moderate' walks: 46 (54%)
- 'Strenuous' walks: 22 (26%)

Our programme also featured a number of entries whereby we combined the walking experience with a social event, such as :

- Day trip to Minehead, Somerset with walking followed by dinner at the Carvery
- Day trip to Pembrokeshire, Tenby & Lydstep
- Short walk in the Wye valley followed by a Barbecue lunch at Tintern
- Christmas walk followed by Pub lunch at The Rose in Redwick
- Joint walks with Sandwell Ramblers and Pembroke Ramblers
- Week walking in the Cairngorms
- Weekend away to Newquay with walks in South Cornwall

Attendance at long walks averaged around 15-16. (Thanks Paul!)

Unfortunately, we again had no new walk leaders this year which means that we have to rely, year after year, on the same small group of people, to enter walks so we can fill our programmes. I'm pleading for more

people to come forward and assist with leading walks — especially for the short walks. If leading a walk seems a daunting task, then try partnering with a friend or experienced leader. You will feel more confident and enjoy the experience when the responsibility is shared.

We had one major accident during the last 12 months: on Sunday, 1 February, while coming down from Myndd Twyn-glas above Mountain Air in Cwmbran, Johnny Kingdom slipped and fell which resulted in a broken ankle. Quick First Aid was provided by Taha Lazim who was also carrying a survival tent and other emergency equipment which enabled us to keep John comfortable in the very cold weather. Because of the difficult location, the Air Ambulance had to be called. John was airlifted to The Heath Hospital, Cardiff and has now made a full recovery and is back walking. Thanks to Taha, the Gwent Ambulance Service and to the Air Ambulance for all the assistance they provided.

It is an event like this which should be a good reminder for us all to ensure we are familiar with the principles of safety, and choosing the appropriate clothing, footwear and equipment to cope with the terrain, prevailing weather conditions and unexpected events during the walks. All walkers should always carry a small first-aid kit and consider taking training in first aid.

Nevertheless, it has been another successful walking year during which we discovered some more of the hidden treasures our countryside has to offer.

5.4.1. Christine said that, after completing the November to February programme, she would stand down. Ken Phillips thanked Christine for all the work that she put in and the meeting applauded. Ken asked everyone at the meeting to consider volunteering for the post, preferably well before February. Christine said that she would give all the help she could to a new incumbent.

5.5. *Membership Secretary* Val Clark

The RA is gradually getting on top of the problems which plagued them last year, making the figures unreliable. Ken Phillips said that he now has a complete list of lapsed members and will contact them.

5.6. *Publicity Secretary* Fred Fee

I typeset, printed and distributed the walks programmes and newsletters with help from Maureen, Ken and Brian on “stuffing” evenings.

The mono laser printer was replaced by a colour laser printer.

In December last year, consultants from “Resources for Change”, hired by Newport City Council, held a meeting at the Civic Centre to help Newport City Council Countryside Services Team (Andrew Briscoombe represented them) to make the Council’s Countryside Service more accessible to the public. Representatives of various countryside organisations and a member of the Farmers Union attended. It seemed that the meeting was interested in how the organisations publicise themselves and with how the Council could cross-fertilise information held by respective organisations. I pointed to the relative effectiveness to South Gwent Ramblers of walks programs are left out Tourist Information Offices and of our website. I noted that current Newport County Council website was not aimed at countryside matters and that was virtually impossible to find any countryside information on the site. Others pointed to the difficulty in knowing who to contact and which department to ask for when using the telephone to get information from the Council. The Farmers Union representative thought that the Council should make more effort to publicise and explain the Countryside Code so that new countryside users would not accidentally become a nuisance, as happens frequently. Despite the rather disparate nature of the input from the meeting, the consultant who ran it said she was “delighted”.

I liaised with Mark Jones, the Tourist Marketing Manager of Monmouthshire County Council about the proposed walking Festival.

In February, I attended a Ramblers Association “Branding Workshop” at a very modern little venue at the Salvation Army Office in Swansea and yes, we had a nice cup of tea, but sadly no bun, just mediocre biscuits. The workshop introduced a uniform set of logos and graphics and fonts to be used in any Ramblers documentation in an effort to present a uniform image of the Ramblers to the public. Currently, the public hold a very narrow view of the Ramblers typified by the observation “we think of the Ramblers as a group of 20 or more 60-year-olds walking in fields with sticks”. The uniform image will replace the stereotypical image allowing the public to identify our literature and advertising more easily and thereby recognise the wide variety of activities undertaken by the Ramblers Association. The disappointingly sparse attendance at the workshop was almost uniformly as sceptical as I was at first. The excellent standard of presentation and the reasoning behind it at first dampened the scepticism and then won most people over, except for a worry about the amount of prescription involved in setting out group literature. A promise was made that once the

advertising and literature had made its mark, say after a year, an amount of leeway in setting out literature would be allowed.

I was invited to attend a Publicity and Recruitment workshop in April in Cardiff. All places were taken and I could not make it for the alternative day.

The organisers of two walks festivals, one run by Newport CC and the other by Monmouthshire CC, have been in touch and I have said that South Gwent Ramblers are interested in taking part in them.

5.6.1. Anna Hughes suggested that we try to get ourselves heard on air and will supply Fred with information about making a bid for airtime.

5.7. *IT Officer's report* Keith Cooper has been too unwell to update the web site with this programme's walks. Fred will liaise with Keith and try to solve the problem.

6. *Election of Officers to the Committee*

6.1. Diana Osman stood down from the committee because of personal commitments and her many contributions to the Group were applauded by the meeting.

6.2. the following were elected:

Chairman - Ken Phillips

Secretary - Ken Phillips

Auditor - Alun Booth

Treasurer - Brian Williams

Rambles Officer - vacant

IT Officer - Keith Cooper [to be confirmed]

Membership Secretary - Val Clark

Footpath Officer - Derek Humble

Publicity Officer - Fred Fee

Minutes Secretary - Fred Fee

Area Representatives - Adrian Sheehan, Fred Fee

Welsh Council representative - Adrian Sheehan

Committee Members:

Kath Carter

Jan Wagenaar

Adrian Sheehan

Brian Turner

Dave Fereday

7. *Events*

7.1. *Skittles evening* organisation is well underway reports Kath Carter. Kath will also organise a further evening for the last week in March 2010

7.2. *Christmas dinner* at Newport Golf Club on Friday 4 December has been organised by Ken Phillips.

7.3. The *Christmas walk* on Tuesday 29 December will be centred on the Rhiwderin Inn and menus for the meal will be circulated at the Christmas dinner where Derek Humble will take orders.

7.4. *Clearwell Caves*. Ken Phillips and Brian Turner will investigate a walk and a visit to the caves.

7.5. More than 20 members are currently interested in the trip to *Okehampton* to be booked for the nights of 7-10 February. Members can use the facilities on Thursday February 11 after they have vacated their rooms. Ken is ready to seek confirmation and deposits from the members.

7.6. Ken mooted four possible *coach trips*: (a) to *Windsor Great Park* with walk(s) organised by Dinah Wallis, (b) to *Lynmouth/Linton* organised by Paul Mellor, (c) to *Kidderminster* and the Severn Valley Railway organised by Ian Reese and (d) a visit to *Pembrokeshire* to enjoy reciprocal walks by Pembroke Ramblers. Four was thought to be too many and so the trip to Pembroke was put on hold. That left three coach trips to consider. There was no clear consensus as to whether we should run two or three trips. A vote was taken on a proposal that there should be three trips with 16 voting for, 11 against and one abstention. Trips (a), (b) and (c) will be organised.

7.7. We agreed to discuss what to do for the *75th anniversary of the Ramblers* this year.

7.8. Ken Phillips proposed a *croquet evening* at Dyffryn Gardens to general agreement from the meeting. Dave Fereday will investigate.

7.9. Thanks to Diana Osman, Kath Carter (with the famous foil) and chefs John Blakemore and Doug Cocksedge, this year's *Barbecue* went well and the meeting agreed to have another one next year at the same venue, Tintern.

7.10. Ken Phillips reported that Brian Williams visited *Westonbirt Arboretum in October* and thought that it was beautiful. Ken proposed that we visit the arboretum in either April for the azaleas or in October for the Autumn colours. The meeting agreed and settled on the October timing after a short discussion.

- 7.11. Dave Fereday proposed a trip to the *Lake District* staying in Kendal for the week beginning Saturday 5 June. Participants will be responsible for their own travel. Dave will book places at the local Hostel for those who wish to stay there and others will book their own accommodation. Dave will be organising long walks and he invited short walkers to join him and showed the meeting a book of good short walks that could be used.
 - 7.12. Dave Fereday asked about the previously-proposed weekend trip to *Barmouth*. Derek Humble said that the accommodation was expensive all-year-round near Barmouth. Ken Phillips suggested staying in a nearby coastal resort to take advantage of off-season bargains rates.
 - 7.13. Ken Phillips reported that John Campbell, now ensconced in Stoke, has a good knowledge of walks in the *Derbyshire Dales* and proposed a weekend walking there centred on the Portland Hotel in Buxton which is reputed to be Rambler Friendly.
 - 7.14. Ken Phillips suggested another trip to *Newquay* which was popular with the meeting. Both Dave Fereday and Ken were aware of further interesting walks. Dave said that if we go to Newquay in 2010, perhaps the stay in buxton and the Dales could be pencilled in for February 2011. The meeting agreed to the proposals.
 - 7.15. Ken Phillips wound up by saying that we welcome suggestions from any member for walks and other events at any time.
8. *AOB* Derek Humble noted that a footpath near the Catsash Road, thought to be a public right of way and used as such for many years, was recently found not to be a right of way. He has claim forms on which members can state any evidence of its use as a public footpath over the years and asked any members who have used the path to fill in a form.

SOUTH GWENT RAMBLERS STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2008 – 2009

Opening Balance 1 October 2008 1,241.91

Income

Christmas Dinner	483.00	
Coach Ramble – Minehead	636.00	
Coach Ramble – Tenby	350.00	
R.A. Holiday Adv	160.00	
Allocation from Area	1,156.00	
Refund from Area	43.74	
Unity Bank – Interest	<u>6.96</u>	
		2,835.70

Expenditure

Christmas Dinner	484.00	
Coach Ramble – Minehead	636.00	
Coach Ramble – Tenby	350.00	
R.A. Charitable Objectives		
Footpaths	0.00	
Countryside protection	0.00	
Access	25.00	
Promoting walking		
Administration/Publicity	1,171.52	
Pre walk expenses	<u>385.54</u>	
	1,557.06	
		<u>3,052.06</u>

Excess of Expenditure over Income 216.36

Closing Balance – 30 September 2009 1,025.55

B Williams Esq

T A L Booth Esq

Treasurer

Auditor

19 October 2009