

Members present - Fred Fee, Maureen Fee, Helen Elliott, Peter Elliott, Brian Williams, Ken Phillips, Koiran James, Paul Mellor, Adrian Sheehan, Gerrard Whyman, Gill Griffin, Phyllis Clayton, Chris Burns, Joan Lang, Roger Binding, Richard Atack, Linda Westerberg, Ted Clevely, Liz Salmon, Jean Butt, Denise Humble, Derek Humble, Dave Fereday, Sue Shea, Val Clark, Robin Hilborne, Sid Carnell, Colin Wallace, Mary Raymond, Dawn Bishop, Tony Phelps, Margaret Woodward, Pam Jones, Ian Reese, Lorna Hall, Margaret Nunn, Kath Carter, Paul Coleman.

Apologies for absence from Brian Turner and Steve Atkins.

1. *Chairman's welcome* Ken Phillips

Welcome to our A.G.M. As you can see we have returned to Usk once again. I trust you have all enjoyed the buffet provided by Koirin. My thanks to her and our lady members who also did a great job.

2011/2012 has been another good year for SGR. We achieved all we set out to do. It would have been nice if our membership had improved however we feel optimistic things will improve in 2013.

Finally my thanks to the Officers and Committee for their help throughout the year.

2. *Minutes of last AGM* were adopted

3. *Matters arising from the minutes*

4. *Officers' reports*

4.1. *Secretary* Ken Phillips

We continue to support the Ruperra Trust. The castle is still up for sale. Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust is in touch with Caerphilly Council and the Heritage Minister and is looking at ways of using Ruperra for public benefit rather than private profit. The Friends of Ruperra continue their excellent work to improve the paths and woodland. Our bench has received some TLC recently. Thanks Brian W and Brian T.

The highlight of the Welsh Ramblers year was the opening of the Wales Coastal Path in May. Newport City Council did us proud and SGR turned out in droves to support the event.

Our social events were a success once again. Our Boules Evening took place this year up at Llanhennock. Arthur was unable to repeat his victory of last year and the honours went to Denise, Mag Nunn and Ken. Thanks Dave for organising it and we look forward to repeating it in 2013.

If anyone has any ideas for future social events please let me know.

4.2. *Treasurer* Brian Williams presented the accounts (see the end of these minutes for the accounts)

4.2.1. Brian noted that the £365 income from the Greater Gwent Area has been paid back and was needed when tone cartridges failed unexpectedly and had to be replaced.

4.2.2. Ken noted that Brian was retiring as Treasurer after many years' service to the Group and that we will miss him. The meeting applauded him.

4.3. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble

There has not been much activity from any parties on the subject of footpath alterations in the last twelve months.

One path at Marshfield which crosses the South Wales railway line is in the process of being diverted over a nearby bridge. This involves three landowners so is taking quite a while to complete, but the safety implications are paramount.

Another path at Coedkernew which was subject to a diversion proposal last year and objected to by this group has been resubmitted on a much more sensible route and should be accepted shortly.

Newport City Council, although short of funds, continues to support the volunteer group with tasks and resources on a weekly basis. Steps, stiles, finger posts, boardwalks and kissing gates are regularly being installed to improve routes around the City and leafleted walks routes are being regularly maintained.

The Wales Coastal Path continues to be improved by Newport City Council along the seawall westwards towards Cardiff although access to the West Usk Lighthouse area from Newport is about to be denied during the work for the electrification of the railway.

The opening of the Wales Coastal Path on 5th/6th May saw Newport having the biggest reported attendance in the principality for its sections inaugural walk with about 300 people setting off from the Transporter Bridge. Sadly, only a few walkers made it back to the start. Most had made use of the free buses supplied by the Council for the return.

Alterations to the complex footpath system at Castle Farm, Penhow which started a couple of years ago, are about to be completed and will make walking routes much easier to follow in future.

4.3. *Rambles Officer* Dave Fereday

It seems unbelievable that I have been doing this job for three years and in the absence of a willing volunteer to take over from me it appears that I will continue for at least another twelve months.

I would like to say that the role is getting easier. In the majority of instances this has most definitely been the case, but more on that later.

Since last year's AGM we will soon shortly complete the third programme which commenced on the 4th December 2011 and we should have walked a total of 559 miles. Why do I use the word should you ask? Well if you recall this past summer the weather was absolutely atrocious and a few walks were cancelled. Therefore the actual mileage walked was less than the planned mileage. But the total mileage walked is not important. What is important that we walked most weekends, visiting new places and revisiting some familiar places, but enjoyed great fellowship with friends who share a common interest. Several new faces have joined the Group and I look forward to them in the future leading walks and easing my burden of having to find walk leaders. If I may quote the example of Steve. He has expressed an interest in leading and has decided to cut his teeth by leading an Easy Sunday walk on the next programme and then follow on with an Evening walk next summer before he ventures onto leading a Long Sunday walk. If anyone else would like to follow Steve's example then please let me know. It's almost like South Gwent Ramblers introducing an apprenticeship scheme.

In addition to the weekend and Wednesday evening walks we did this year have two enjoyable coach trips and in both instances we were fortunate with the weather. In July we went to Paignton took a ride on the steam train to Kingswear and then returned to the Palace Hotel in Paignton for our meal. This of course was the venue for our weekend away several years ago. In September we travelled to Bosherton to enjoy the splendour of the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. In February Ken organised another visit to the Sporting Manor on Dartmoor and just last month the annual autumn week away was spent in the new venue of Weymouth. Back in June I arranged a week in Scotland where five of us climbed five Munros and walked two sections of the West Highland Way. John Smith, Sid and myself extended our stay walking in Northumberland and Yorkshire. The three of us agreed that on the day we walked the Pennine Way to High Cup Nick we had never been so wet whilst walking. We later learned that a month's rainfall fell in just two hours. The annual trip next June or whenever is open to offers. For personal reasons I will not be able to organise anything until the new year. So if any member had any suggestions then please let me know, if not I will attempt to do something early 2013.

Last Summer's programme included two walks designed for all members of the Group. Peter and Helen volunteered to lead one walk, which was unfortunately cancelled due to the weather, already referred to. Dawn and Tony led the second walk and I think that one walk is insufficient to gauge whether this is idea is a success or not. Consequently we shall try the idea again next summer.

At the last Committee meeting it was mooted whether or not we could start to offer a medium walk during the week, as other groups in Gwent notably Pontypool and Lower Wye have done, resulting in an influx of new faces. It also gives an option for our retired members, and they seem to be increasing in numbers each year, why even I will be swelling the ranks soon, to walk with friends during the week. It is imperative that we do not tread on the toes of other organisations who already walk on week days. The obvious example is the U3A, who according to their website walk on Wednesdays. However we need to discuss this in greater detail with the members and of course today's AGM is a great forum for this. Therefore please feel free to discuss during AOB.

Finally I did say that there is one area where my job can be difficult and that in respect of finding walk leaders. I have to get final details of the next programme to Fred this coming week and there are still a few gaps so please if you are able please let me know after the meeting if you can slot into any of those gaps. I'm sure the last thing we would all want is a programme that appears to be sponsored by GAP.

- 4.3.1. Ken wondered why so few turn up for medium walks. Jean and Arthur Butt, Linda Westerberg and Joan Lang agreed that the numbers diminished because some were no longer able to do the walks and a number were suffering from long-term injuries.
- 4.3.2. Dave suggested that should feature alternate medium and short walks once every *other* week during the winter to general agreement.
- 4.3.3. Fred offered help to anyone who wanted to lead a walk but was not confident of doing so. He offered to accompany a new leader on pre-walks and on the walks themselves and was sure that other experienced leaders would do the same.
- 4.3.4. Dave wondered if we could provide additional mid-week moderate walks. He noted that U3A provide Wednesday walks and that we should avoid that day. Discussion ensued as to which day was most favoured with Tuesday and Thursday coming out tops. Dave wondered if we could have the walk on either day at the convenience of the leader and no objection was made. Ted said that he and Fred go on midweek walks choosing a day that looked the best bet for good weather, but was unsure whether this could be done with a walks programme.

4.4. *Membership Secretary* Val Clark

Our membership at the end of last year was 158 and this year it is down to 150.

There are number of factors which can account for the decrease in membership, the economic situation being a primary cause. We have lost quite a few of our long standing members due to age, illness and some moving out of our area.

The internet is fast becoming our main source of new members and the sooner we sort out our website the better it will be for us. We must make every effort to make new members welcome and I ask all walks leaders and established members to help in doing so especially in their first few walks with the group.

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- 4.4.1. Ken said that a new Ramblers Association computer system and the resultant discovery of numerous false entries in the membership list was likely to be the cause of most of the decline.

4.5. *Publicity Secretary and IT Officer* Fred Fee

A steady stream of items pass to me from the website contact page. I filter them and pass on any relevant ones, thinking that the usual scams would not be of interest to members. Most items are businesses providing walk and related services are contacting us through south-gwent@ntlworld.com email. I usually circulate the emails and reply that I have done so.

The website receives continual attention to keep it up-to date. In addition, the new Archive menu provides access to minutes of AGMs and Committee meetings. I moved the Early Years of South Gwent Rambles paper to the Archive menu.

I sent a copy of an article about South Gwent Ramblers to the Argus but it was not printed as far as I know.

Walks programmes and newsletters were laid out, printed, distributed and put on the web site as usual.

As Ken noted, membership is down and I have, at times, circulated programmes to doctor's surgeries and other places none of which produce any enquiries. Only the Argus What's On entry and the Tourist Information Office at the central library have lead to new members.

4.5.1. Ken wondered if there was a way that we could use the URL of the old web site and Fred agreed that he would look into buying it.

4.6. *Area Representative* Adrian Sheehan

Area continues to provide the link with Ramblers in Wales and nationally. Contact and information about what is happening is available via the web.

The Wales office is involved in consulting about Access. There is also discussion about proposed wind-farm developments.

Group budgets have been agreed again. There are still discussions about the size of reserves held by some Groups and Areas but no further action is being taken at present.

Message from Benedict Southworth, Chief Executive, Ramblers' Association

The General Council will be on the 13th – 14th of April 2013. Thanks to those areas who have offered to host General Council in coming years. I hope you'll allow me to encourage you to hold as open as possible discussions and competition for who will represent your area and open up the chance for new people to attend as well. I hope as many of you as possible will also be attending.

Jonathan Kipling and I have attended a series of regional meetings to hear directly from volunteers and members their views about Ramblers and what we should be doing to ensure that we can deliver our mission. We hope to arrange more in the spring. Jonathan and I have also held equivalent meetings in Scotland and Wales.

The business plan and the budget for 2012-13 is the first to take into account the new devolution agreements for Ramblers Scotland and Ramblers Cymru. We now have plans for Wales and Scotland that provide an indication of how the separate identity and direction that these two entities will develop. We remain working on providing clarity about the services that Ramblers GB is providing to those entities.

There is a planned review of the membership rates to be undertaken in September

In May the trustees requested that I try and maintain friendly and constructive relationships with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays. I have met with RWH and attended two trustees' meetings of Ramblers Holiday Charitable Trust. The trustees gave careful consideration to the motion at the May meeting, eventually confirming that the decision to award the contract to HF holidays was the correct one.

I want to close by giving you an update on our work to protect the public paths and our campaigning work in general. As I have travelled around England and Wales I'm incredibly impressed by the diligence and expertise of our footpaths and access volunteers. *Activities*

- 4.7. The **Christmas Dinner** will be held on 13 December and 43 have booked so far. Ken disclosed the menu options.
- 4.8. The **Christmas Walk** will be held on Friday 28 December at the Carpenter's Arms, Coed-y-Paen with a 5-mile moderate walk beforehand. The menu is all but decided.
- 4.9. Ken indicated that the **Okehampton** trip is booked for Sunday 3 – Friday 8 February. Bookings have to be made soon to Ken. The cost is £163 full board with about 10% extra for a single room.
- 4.10. **Skittles** is pencilled in for 21 March and in November. Definite dates to come later.
- 4.11. Ken has left June blank since it has been a custom for long walkers to disappear for a week or so in June for some hard walking.
- 4.12. Coach trips this year have suffered from lower booking than usual. One had an early start and Ken wondered if that was a factor. After a brief discussion, no clear reason for the low turn-out emerged.

Proposals for events next year

- 4.13. Ken started by suggesting a trip to **Winchester** which members at the meeting found broadly interesting.
- 4.14. Ian Reese noted that (a) railway trips have been done for years and that there should be no problem with missing one this year and (b) there would be no problems with more than one walk. Ken expanded on the latter, that the venue can matter for the short and sometimes medium walkers when they are waiting for the long walkers to appear. Ian agreed that there should be something of interest at a venue. Ken said that the length of walks should be such that they get back at a reasonable time with Peter pointing out that coastal paths are particularly vicarious in

determining walk length. The meeting agreed. Dawn suggested that the long walkers be dropped off from the coach on the way to a venue so that they would have more time for walking while not keeping others waiting too long.

- 4.15. Paul Mellor suggested a coach trip to **Westonbirt** Arboretum to see the lights with a meal on the way back. The meeting generally thought that we had been to Westonbirt recently, but the idea was a good one for later.
 - 4.16. Paul also suggested a coach trip to **Church Stretton** and Ian agreed with him and said that he could do the walks. Joan Lang asked if Ironbridge was close. Dave said that it was and noted that Much Wenlock was also close. Ken said that he could find a place to eat on the way back. Dawn suggested a long walk to the place where we eat. Ian is in charge of the details of the walks and agreed to have a date in July and other details in time for the next Committee meeting in late January or February.
 - 4.17. Re **Boules** in July at the Wheatsheaf, Dave said that he would book it, but would have to wait until after fixtures of matches there had been published in January.
 - 4.18. Re the **Barbecue** in 11 August, Derek agreed to lead a walk at the usual Tintern venue.
 - 4.19. Re a second coach trip, Lorna suggested **Laugharne** (Carmarthen) and Joan Lang proposed Winchester where we have been before but only scratched the surface. After some discussion, Dave suggested that we go to Winchester this year and keep Laugharne for next year. Ian has a friend in the Winchester area who may be able to help with walks.
 - 4.20. Re the week away, Sandra Cocksedge produced a report on **Guernsey**. Sandra also noted a "Tennerfest" in September and October with widespread availability of meals for a tenner. The loW firm who took us to Weymouth this year indicated that they could provide a bus and transport from Weymouth via fast catamaran. Ken suggested a return to **Paignton** or **Newquay**. Ian made three suggestions: ① **Croyde Bay** which has an attractive hotel and good walking, ② **Llandudno** for seaside and hill walking and ③ a trip to be suggested by a friend who organises walking and dancing trips. Peter said that he would like a hotel with a standard a little higher than the one at Weymouth and the meeting generally agreed. Linda Westerberg and Mary Raymond proposed that we adopt the Guernsey suggestion and sparked some discussion of the merits of the various proposals. Arthur Butt asked what a reasonable cost was for the trip, noting that the cost for Newquay was £230. After some to-ing and fro-ing, Fred suggested we adopt Croyde bay because of the name and because he had not been there and there was general interest from the meeting.
5. **AOB**
- 5.1. Denise thanked the committee and brought applause from the meeting.
 - 5.2. Ken mentioned that he had documents showing planned wind farm installation by RES UK and passed it to Derek.

6. *Election of Officers to the Committee*

Ken made a plea for younger members to volunteer to join the committee: in future years we will need experienced members to take over from the current incumbents. Phyllis Clayton thought that the appointment of a Vice Chairman would be a step in the right direction. Ken took this to be the first steps in volunteering and asked Phyllis if she would take up the post. Swayed by a groundswell of support from the meeting, Phyllis agreed. Ken noted that John Appleby had agreed to volunteer for the post of Auditor since our long-term Auditor, Alun Booth, wished to retire. Joan Lang and Roger Binding agreed to join the committee and were followed by Liz Salmon and Chris Burns. The new committee as agreed at the meeting is as follows:

Chairman - Ken Phillips

Vice Chairwoman - Phyllis Clayton

Secretary - Colin Wallace

Treasurer - Ken Phillips

Rambles Officer - Dave Fereday

IT Officer - Fred Fee

Membership Secretary - Dawn Bishop

Footpath Officer - Derek Humble

Publicity Officer - Fred Fee

Minutes Secretary - Fred Fee

Area Representatives - Adrian Sheehan, Fred Fee

Auditor - John Appleby

Committee members:

Adrian Sheehan, Dawn Bishop, Brian Turner, Tony Phelps, Val Clark,
Joan Lang, Roger Binding, Liz Salmon, Chris Burns

SOUTH GWENT RAMBLERS STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2011 - 2012

Opening Balance - 1st. October 2011

£ 1,033 – 69

Income.

Christmas Dinner	379 – 50
R.A. Holiday advertisement	120 – 00
Allocation from Area	865 – 00
Coach ramble - Dartmouth	450 – 00
Coach ramble - Bosherton	440 – 00
Area walk & refreshments	71 85
Area payment re coastal path	30 - 00
Area special payment –	
Re: toner (re payable)	365 - 00
Bank interest	1 – 35

2722 – 70

Expenditure

Christmas Dinner	379 – 50
Coach ramble - Dartmouth	450 - 00
Coach ramble - Bosherton	440 – 00
Parc Golf Club – deposit for	
Christmas Dinner. Re 2012	100 – 00
R.A. Objectives	
Access	25 – 00
Promote walking	865 – 09
Prewalking	52 – 00

2311 – 59

Excess of Income over Expenditure

411 – 11.

Closing Balance 30th. September 2012

£ 1,444 – 80.

B. Williams Esq.

T.A.L.Booth Esq.

Treasurer

B. Williams
16/10/12

Auditor. Dated:

T.A.L. Booth 16/10/2012