

Members present - Colin Wallace, Sue Shea, Sheila Holmes, Ted Cleveley, Ken Phillips, Joan Lang, Chris Burns, Charles Goodbred, Phyllis Clayton, Robin Hilborne, Jan Lavis, Paul Mellor, Peter Elliott, Maureen Fee, Denise Humble, Derek Humble, Gill Griffin, Dave Fereday, Lorna Hall, Ken Poole, Jan Wagenaar, Sid Carnell, John Kingdom, Iris Buckingham, Ann Sanford, Margaret Woodward, Linda Westerberg, Margaret Nunn, Kath Carter, Adrian Sheehan, Fred Fee, Dawn Bishop, Roger Binding, Steve Atkins.

Apologies for absence from David Page.

1. *Chairman's welcome* Ken Phillips

Ken thanked Roger for the walk and then thanked Colin and Sue for stepping in at short notice to organise the refreshment after Koiran took ill. The meeting applauded their efforts.

2. *Minutes of last AGM* were adopted

3. *Matters arising from the minutes* none

4. *Officers' reports*

4.1. *Secretary* Colin Wallace

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 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.

The Diamond Jubilee Walk at Bassaleg was officially opened by Derek Brockway on the first of September and 75 walkers attended.

There is a proposal for a Big Welsh Walk on the first bank holiday in May 2014. This is to celebrate the second anniversary of the opening of the coastal path. As secretary I will keep members informed as more news updates on this event are received.

Once again our social events were a great success. This includes our day outings and breaks away. The Boules evening this year took place in Llanhennock and in a close final Derek, Jan and Val defeated Ted, Fred and Sue.

As many of you may already be aware Arthur Butt who has walked with the Ramblers for many years is at the moment in poor health. Some members went to visit him a couple of weeks ago as he was about to celebrate his 87th Birthday, so we gave him a card on behalf of the Ramblers. We will continue to keep in touch with Arthur and Jean during these difficult times.

At this time I would like to thank all the members who have helped over the last year this includes, the committee, walk leaders, social events organisers, special thanks today for Roger leading the walk and to all those who helped prepare the food and drinks today. Hopefully I have not missed anyone out.

Finally if any members have any ideas for future social events please let the committee know as we can discuss them at our next meeting in January.

4.2. *Treasurer* Ken Phillips presented the accounts (see the end of these minutes for the accounts)

Our accounts show a loss of £316.14. However, if you take into consideration the two items which refer to last year *i.e.* the repayment of the Area loan (£365) and the inclusion of the 2012 Christmas Dinner deposit (£100), the actual loss is £51.14. This is more or less in line with our budget forecast.

We have been advised by the Greater Gwent Area Treasurer that Ramblers Cymru (they provide our allocation) have requested Groups strive to reduce their reserves over the next three years.

When preparing SGR's budget for 2013/2014 this has been taken into account. We have included two items *i.e.* Walks Leader and First Aid courses which together with a small increase in our Publicity costs should have the effect of reducing our reserves to around £700 at the end of September 2014.

We have not received confirmation to date that our budget request for £790 has been accepted for 2013/14, so things could change.

4.2.1. Peter Elliott said that he had been on a Ramblers Worldwide holiday and found out that Ramblers Worldwide offer funds to Groups when Ramblers Association members go on holiday. He thought that you had to apply to Ramblers Holidays to register a Group. Ken said that the committee will look into it. Dave said the Ramblers Worldwide began making such offers when Holiday Fellowship took over as preferred holiday partners to the Ramblers Association.

4.3. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble

The main item to report is the completion and opening of the Diamond Jubilee Walk at Bassaleg. This 10 mile route follows existing footpaths around the boundary of Graig Community Council Ward and was requested by its Councillor, who opened it on 1st September with Derek Brockway aka the Weatherman Walking.

The situation concerning misdirection signs at Iron Bridge Cottage look likely to be resolved in the near future.

The claim for bridleway status on footpaths reported last year, at Llanbedr Mill near Langstone, seems to have ground to a halt.

There have been quite a few minor diversions to the footpath system which won't be a problem to walkers and some footpath creation orders to improve the Coastal Path around Peterstone and St Mellons.

I intend to object to the siting of a 77 metre tall wind turbine between Langstone and Llanwern, which would detract from the fine views from the site of Llanwern Hall. There is a field covered with solar panels close to the proposed site of the turbine which is already intrusive.

The two generators would be linked together.

The volunteer group have been kept busy all year with path maintenance and refurbishing and replacing steps and handrails, repair of fencing and implementing methods to prevent damage to paths by horses and motorcycles.

4.3.3. Roger noted that a gate was missing allowing access of motorbikes onto a footpath on one of his pre-walks. Jan Wagenaar advised him to ring Cwmcarn Forest Drive for the number of the the Landscape Security Officer, a Police Officer who deals with such matters.

4.3.4. Derek added that it is near the final date for the consultation on the M4 new route. He will try to keep up with any relevant developments.

4.4. *Rambles Officer* Dave Fereday

I normally start my report by confirming how many miles we have walked during the past twelve months. I thought this year I would break with tradition, at least my tradition, as basically how far we walk is irrelevant. What is relevant is that we have together as a Group explored the countryside in this wonderful area we are fortunate to be residents of. In addition of course on coach trips we returned to the former capital of England, Winchester and also explored the area around Ironbridge in Shropshire. Not to mention the five day trip to Jersey just last month, how different the weather was.

What all the local walks and the three trips have in common is one thing. Any takers? It is of course the fact that all walks were led by one of our volunteer leaders. We are very fortunate that we have a pool of willing members who are prepared to plan and lead walks. They certainly make my job as Walks Coordinator a lot easier.

We certainly have a considerable number of long walk leaders. Unfortunately during the past twelve months we have lost the services of two of our most experienced and long standing leaders of medium walks, Dinah due to injury and Arthur due to illness. Additionally we have lost Robin due to matrimonial bliss. Fortunately Koran and Steve have entered the fray. However that still only means a pool of three medium walk leaders, just those two and Denise. Consequently we still have a definite need for additional leaders for what we call moderate or medium walks. There may be people who are a little nervous to lead walks. As I retire late March, yes I know I don't look old enough, I will be able to assist with any new leader by joining them on a prewalk in mid week from April onwards.

Another point I was asked to raise in my report was the reducing numbers attending the midweek evening walks. Interestingly the majority of mid week walkers were what could be affectionately called

long walkers. When I look around the room now I can see people who are members of other clubs, in addition to the Ramblers. Several are also NOGs and that could potentially affect attendance for certain Sunday walks, if for example it coincides with a NOG weekend Hostel trip. Other people are also members of the Newport Local History Society, who meet on alternate Wednesdays. This has resulted in an adverse affect on people attending the Wednesday evening walks. If you recall I used the phrase mid week walks earlier, as it has been suggested we have a debate whether to switch the evening from a Wednesday. Obviously that would be a significant change and should not be decided by the committee in isolation but by the membership as a whole and this is an ideal forum. Therefore the question is, should we change our traditional mid week walk from a Wednesday? If so to when? Maybe as Tuesday is only two days after Sunday, if we change should it be to Thursday? Alternatively we could alternate nights or is that too confusing?

So the floor is yours either now or in AOB according to our esteemed Chairman

4.4.1. In response to Dave asking whether to change the midweek walk from a Wednesday, Derek suggested a trial period with a day other than Wednesday, but wondered which day. Fred thought a fixed day (rather than a variable one) and suggested Thursday. Adrian suggested regular alternating days., thereby getting the best of both. Dave commented that he had commitments some nights during the week and could not make it on particular nights.

4.4.2. After further discussion, Ken proposed that the day be left to the leader of a walk, that Dave will advise if necessary and that the trial be for one season. The committee agreed.

4.5. *Membership Secretary* Dawn reported that we had welcomed four new members, had three die and four lapse. This left 152 in the Group, about the same as last year.

4.6. *Publicity Secretary and IT Officer* Fred Fee

I have done my usual job of setting out, printing and distributing programmes and newsletters. Programmes and newsletters go to South Gwent Ramblers members whether active or not. Programmes also go to some interested non-members from other Ramblers Groups, to various organisation which include our walks on their internal publications (e.g. Newport CC, Monmouthshire CC), to Newport and Abergavenny Tourist Information Offices and to Ramblers Cymru. I put walks notifications in the What's On section of the Argus.

Most new members come from visitors to our web sites which they find from the Ramblers Association site and from search engines. Of the rest almost all come from the Newport Tourist Information Office.

There is still a cornucopia of adverts and other messages to filter and pass on to the on-line circulation and Robin Hilbourne pointed out the National Trust web site which contains a large walks section. A steady trickle of putative members use the web site form to request information on joining.

Keith Cooper was unable to sort out the problems in retrieving the old South Gwent Ramblers web site name and the authority to move it to me. Keith did not pay for the old site name to continue in his ownership and his tenure of the name ran out during this year. This was of no consequence because I ran out of patience and registered the current, similar name and obtained web space for the site using the new name. The current host of the site underwent extensive modernisation this year and is a now very fast and still very reliable.

I introduced a new site for smart phones in parallel to our site for computer browsers and keep both our sites up to date with such items as the walks programme, committee members and events.

If you have any suggestions for improving the site

4.7. *Area Representative* Adrian Sheehan

Area's main purpose to keep links between the Greater Gwent groups, to give support and to link SGR to the Ramblers Association particularly through the budget. Adrian reminded members that Ramblers Association expect all reserves to be equivalent of one year's expenditure (except for those funds earmarked for a specific purpose) and that South Gwent Ramblers should work towards this.

Members can stay in touch through the Ramblers Association website which has been revamped and is worth a look.

Adrian drew attention to Ramblers Routes, a database of walks that members can use, contribute to and develop. Contributors need training. If the Area can get 15 people together, training is provided free.

The next Welsh Council is 12th and 13th April in Newtown. The next Area Council is 19th February in Newport. Anyone is welcome to attend Area Council. Members of the Group can apply to attend Welsh Council. It's worth going along to find out what is going on.

Adrian finished by commenting that Area membership was a little down, in line with the national figures.

1. Fred agreed to put the Area Newsletter onto the into the Archive on the South Gwent Ramblers web site., noting that the Area keep Group committees informed about developments at the Ramblers Association and they also maintain friendly relations between the Groups. It is surprising that some Areas have to act as mediators between Groups on bad terms.
2. Adrian gave Walks Sharing as an Area initiative that drew support across the Groups.

7. *Activities* Ken Phillips

- 7.6. The Christmas dinner has attracted 37 members, a little down from last year.
- 7.7. Peter Elliott informed us that his walk on Sunday 15 December would include lunch at Wetherspoon's, Ebbw Vale and be a moderate 7 miles. The format is the train to Ebbw Vale, the walk, the lunch and a gentle walk back to the station. Peter would like advance payment to ensure that a table could be booked.
- 7.8. The Christmas walk will take place on 27 December.
- 7.9. Another trip to Okehampton will be booked for 2 February with new guided walks promised.
- 7.10. Our usual skittles tournament is down for 13 March 2014 and we have to pay for hire of the alley. Dave suggested a possible alternative venue at the St Julian's pub, Caerleon. They can do catering.
- 7.11. Cath and Ray Cantwell have volunteered a trip to Weston-super-Mare for a walk to Sandy bay round the headland. Common consent decided that this was a good idea.
- 7.12. For July, as he did last year, Dave suggested a coach trip to Laugharne and has done his homework: 7-mile and a 2.3-mile walks or using the coach to go to Saundersfoot for non-walkers or for those who do not want to walk in inclement weather. This suggestion was well received.
- 7.13. Dave would also organise the July Boules event.
- 7.14. Once again the Barbecue would be a Tintern, and - amazingly - Derek has yet another new walk in mind.
- 7.15. Last year, the September coach trip was not well subscribed. Ken asked if we needed a second coach trip after the trips to Weston-super-Mare and Laugharne. The meeting though that it was not needed.
- 7.16. Ken put the thought of a return trip to Guernsey or a return to Newquay on the table for a four- or five-day trip on October. The majority at the meeting preferred Guernsey.
- 7.17. Derek had suggested a trip to Barmouth last year but could not find suitable accommodation. He has now found a rambler-friendly hotel and suggested a trip this year. Ken said that he could get in touch with loW coaches for a quote on such a trip. The suggestion was popular with the meeting.

8. *Election of Officers to the Committee*

Chairman - Ken Phillips

Vice Chairwoman - Phyllis Clayton

Secretary - Colin Wallace (Dawn as Deputy) *Treasurer* - Ken Phillips

Rambles Officer - Dave Fereday

IT Officer - Fred Fee

Membership Secretary - Joan Lang

Footpath Officer - Derek Humble

Publicity Officer - Fred Fee

Minutes Secretary - Fred Fee

Area Representatives - Adrian Sheehan, Fred Fee

Auditor - Denise Humble

Committee members: Adrian Sheehan, Brian Turner, Roger Binding, Dawn Bishop

7. *AOB*

- 7.1. Paul Mellor thanked Colin Wallace and Sue Shea for hastily putting together the super refreshments at short notice to much applause by the meeting.
- 7.2. Peter Elliott then stood up and said that Ken's superb organisation of the Jersey trip and many others before had not gone unnoticed. With the product of whip-round in Jersey for a suitably liquid thank-you in his pocket, Peter decided not to burden our wonderful Chairman with the task of carrying such liquid refreshment back to Britain. Instead Peter determined to present it to Ken at this meeting. On his return, Peter Peter to set out on a saga to find Ken's reputedly favourite tippie - a popular cocktail - "Sex on the Beach". Peter's description of his troubles in seeking the language to ask where to obtain "Sex on the Beach" reduced to meeting to tears of laughter. Eventually, as the meeting slowly recovered, Peter handed a large wrapped object to Ken, the object having a promising multi-cylindrical shape, allegedly containing the ingredients of the aforesaid cocktail. The meeting dissolved into laughter once again which mutated over time into loud applause.
- 7.3. Lorna noted that the second anniversary of the Welsh Coastal Path was on the first May bank holiday.

South Gwent Ramblers Statement of Accounts 2012/2013

Opening Balance at 1st October 2012 **1444.80**

Income

Repayment of 2012 Xmas Dinner deposit	100.00
1st Quarter Area Allocation	130.00
Nov12 Prog Advert - Ramblers Holidays	60.00
2nd Quarter Area Allocation	125.00
3rd Quarter Area Allocation	125.00
Mar13 Prog Advert - Ramblers Holidays	60.00
Bank Interest March & September 2013	1.30
4th Quarter Area Allocation	125.00
Total Income	726.30

Expenditure

Repayment of 2012 Area Loan	365.00
SGR Annual General Meeting Costs	88.00
Prewalk Expense	175.34
Ruperra Trust	25.00
SGR Publicity Costs	204.90
Wales Air Ambulance	50.00
Admin	134.20
Total Expenditure	1042.44

Excess of Expenditure over Income **-316.14**

Closing Balance at 31/5/13 at 30th Sept 2013 **1128.66**

Mr K.Phillips

Mrs D Humble

Treasurer

Auditor

Dated