



South Gwent Ramblers



Minutes of the AGM held on
22 November 2015 at Usk Centenary Hall

Members present - Joan Lang, Mike Fallaize, Richard Atack, Paul Mellor, Ceri Williams, Stephen Williams, Pam Jones, Steve Atkins, Dave Fereday, Lorna Hall, Ted Clevely, Ivor Barclay, Jan Wagenaar, Roger Binding, Charles Goodreid, Shiela Holmes, Linda Westerberg, Val Clark, Margaret Nunn, Andrew Wilmott, Sidney Carnell, Peter Elliott, Helen Elliott, Adrian Sheehan, John Smith, Maureen Fee, Ken Phillips, Sue Shea, Colin Wallace, Fred Fee.

Apologies for absence from Margaret Woodward, Liz salmon, Jan Lavis, Gill Griffin, Jean Butt, Denise Humble, Derek Humble, Phyllis Clayton, David Page.

1. *Chairman's welcome* Ken Phillips

Welcome once again to our AGM I trust you enjoyed your walk and the buffet. My thanks to Sue and Colin for organising the buffet and to Roger Binding for leading our walk.

2014/15 has seen SGR continue to flourish and all the plans we made at last year's AGM were achieved. I feel am sure 2015/16 will be no different so we can look forward to another successful year.

2014/15 was not kind to us all and we lost many friends this year. We will try and give the families who suffered these sad events our support where ever we can.

Those of our members who are struggling with ill-health are also in our thoughts and sincerely hope 2016 will see an improvement for you.

Finally I would thank members of our committee and our walks leaders for their continued support.

2. *Minutes of last AGM* were adopted

3. *Matters arising from the minutes* are all discussed below

4. *Officers' reports*

4.1. *Secretary* Colin Wallace had nothing to report more than would be discussed under other agenda items.

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

Our bank balance at 30th September 2015 was £851.85

We started the year (1 October 2014) with a balance of £1382.59 which means we made a loss of £530.74 this year. We planned to reduce our reserves by £380 in order to bring them more in line with the Charity Commission's guidelines. We did achieve that aim: however. we did incur a cost of £204.66 in respect of 5 year's web costs which had not been included in our budget.

Our budget for 2015/16 is £1050. This is based on 2015 expenditure allowing for inflation. This amount has been submitted to Ramblers Cymru and has been approved. We have already received the first instalment of £525

4.2.1. Some figures in this year's accounts hark back to spending in the previous year because of computer consumables which cannot be guaranteed to run out conveniently in any particular year.

4.2.2. The walk expenses are up and this is good. We budgeted for such an amount and worried about unused moneys lessening our authority to repeat the budget request

4.2.3. Roger asked why the accounts showed that we had received less money this year than last. Ken said that Charities Commission wished to see less money held by charities and that the money be used for the charity's charitable aims instead. The Ramblers Association and Area asked that Groups be seen to be compliant. After a discussion that

revealed a small degree of unease about this matter, Adrian and Fred reassured members that the Area was keen to help any Group that had any financial problems and that they had a good record of doing so.

4.3. *Footpaths Officer* Derek Humble

The proposed siting of a 77-metre wind turbine at Clearwell Farm, Penrte Poeth, which would ruin the countryside views to and from Ruppera and the Ridgeway is still being considered by the planning department.

Similar plans at Bishton have been refused and are being appealed.

Plans for solar panels at Llanmartin have been allowed following appeal.

The situation concerning misdirection signs at Iron Bridge Cottage, Draethen, is still unresolved. Caerphilly Council are to meet with interested parties to formulate a sign to make walkers aware of their rights to walk the correct line of the path if they wish.

The claim for bridleway status on footpaths reported two years ago at Llandevaud Mill near Langstone, has been to appeal and one route had been allowed subject to ratification by Welsh Ministers. However, it was found that the accompanying map with the Order was not valid owing to it not having a scale shown and was therefore thrown out! The claim will no doubt be started all over again.

The riverside footpath/cycleway from the Transporter Bridge to Newport Bridge on the west side, and from Newport Bridge to the Southern Distributor Bridge on the east side has been completed.

A safe route has been granted across the main railway line at Marshfield on an existing bridge. This should be completed alongside the engineering works for the electrification of the line.

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 access to paths by horses and motorcycles.

4.4. *Rambles Officer* Dave Fereday

4.4.1. Dave began noting that few medium walks were volunteered and asked if we should go on with no medium walks. Steve added that most short walks were very poorly attended and nobody turned up for one walk. Joan agreed: she was not keen to volunteer further short walks. Ken rhetorically asked "What are the length of our walks?", noting that most walks were about the 10-mile mark: he continued to say that we don't have medium walk support and leaders are not happy. Ted Cleveley said that some members were not up to doing more than 10 miles and would welcome a shorter walks when the only alternative was a long one. Fred said that he would send an email to members asking them to let him know if they intended to volunteer such a walk as an alternative to a 10+ mile walk: he would then circulate members with information about the walk and put the information no-line if possible.

4.4.2. Ken noted that a Bank Holiday walk had proved popular on a test walk led by Roger. The meeting agreed that Bank Holiday walks should be made official from now on. Paul Mellor suggested that the moderate/strenuous grade boundary could be determined by the number of the climbs in a walk. After some discussion involving some to-ing and fro-ing about the definition of "a climb" and how to take into account its extent, the meeting decided it would be too difficult to administer with consistency.

4.4.3. Roger noted that evening walks were poorly attended. Steve said that his experience was hit-and-miss with one walk attended poorly and another well. Mike Fallaize suggested cutting down to one walk a month, which the meeting decided was not sufficiently frequent to attract regular walkers. Dave asked if one a fortnight would be a viable option and the meeting agreed.

4.5. *Membership Secretary* Joan Lang

Membership at the end of September stood at 142, pretty much the same as last year. Two more members have joined since but we will soon be losing one long-standing member, Margaret Woodward, who is moving from the area to live nearer her family in Hampshire.

I had quite a lot of enquiries from the Ramblers on-line and reply to them all with further details of our Group. Some prefer to join using an application form than on-line and so I have brought some forms with me for leaders who know of someone who is interested in joining.

We would like to increase our membership and word of mouth is sometimes the best way to do that. So please bear that in mind.

4.6. *Publicity Secretary and IT Officer* Fred Fee

I produced walks programmes from data gathered by Dave, set out newsletters written by Ken, put address labels and stamps on envelopes, fold the programmes and newsletter and put them into envelopes aided by fellow "Stuffers" who included Maureen, Ted, Ken, Dave and Roger. Many thanks to all of them. All members receive a programme and some programmes were placed in the Tourist Information Office in the Library entrance until it closed. After a hiatus, I believe that the library has taken over some of the Tourist Information Office jobs and I will give them our programmes if they will take them.

I added electronic forms of the programme to our web sites (one site for large screen for pads and computers and one site for smaller screens of smartphones) and upload them onto the Ramblers Association web site.

The Ramblers Association site is now our main source of new members and I loaded our walks data onto their site.

I kept the web sites up to date, for example when walks change after the programmes are published, or when the committee changes and by deleting events from the forthcoming events list as they become out-of-date.

Made the calendar.

In October, an Over 50s event was staged by Newport CC in the Sports Centre. The NOGs were having a spot there and Ivor kindly invited South Gwent Ramblers to join them. Our joint stand was a popular one.

The Ramblers Association is running a Pathwatch scheme and thereby trying to survey the condition of all the footpaths in Britain. It is an opportune time to do a survey because the paths are now in a worse state than at any time since I started using them. Councils have largely abandoned footpath maintenance in the last three or four years as they have taken money out of footpath maintenance and used it for other things. Each survey takes in the paths within a kilometre square. I have surveyed two and found several blocked and dangerous parts of the pathways.

4.6.1. Ken mentioned that Newport CC were holding a meeting to start planning a walks festival (as yet untitled). Fred and Ken will go to the meeting and Ivor may go as well.

4.7. *Area Representative* Adrian Sheehan

GG Area continues to act as a link between Ramblers at national level and the Greater Gwent groups. Area Council held its AGM on the 8th November 2015.

Overall the Area has remained stable. Overall membership in the Area has seen a small reduction. Area officers have not changed; Keith Donovan is the Chair, Adrian Sheehan is Secretary, Gwyn Smith is Treasurer and Peter Hedges is Membership Secretary.

All GG Groups have agreed budgets. Area Treasurer reminded Groups that Area has funding available to support particular activities by Groups which they can apply for through Area Council. Groups were also reminded that if they have any significant expenditure there should be an audit trail showing where this expenditure was agreed and authorised by Group officers.

The Area AGM was attended by Alan Norton, the current Chair of Ramblers Cymru and by Rebecca Brough a Policy Advocate based at the Ramblers Cardiff office. Alan said it was important that members talked with the Executive officers either directly or through Area. He wants to know what members want. Alan talked about the good work that Benedict Southworth is doing as the Chief Executive of Ramblers, making it into a more effective charitable organisation, promoting Ramblers' aims. Alan talked at length about the Big Pathwatch project. This was being funded by the Ramblers Holiday Trust and was providing important information to support future activities. There needs to be a statistically significant number of "squares" surveyed and he encouraged all members to get involved if possible.

Rebecca talked about the work she is involved with at present, advocacy with the Welsh Government in relation to the Green paper on Countryside Access in Wales. Ramblers Cymru will be campaigning about this up to and during the elections in Wales in May. She asked that members engage with local politicians as well as gathering information for Ramblers on the state of the footpath network. She asked that copies of newsletters and other publicity should be copied to the Cardiff office to let them know what is going on. If the Cardiff office can help Groups in any way then they would be happy to do so. Improving communication also means more use of social media – post things on Facebook and other sites if possible.

There was information about Let's Walk Cymru. LWC organises short walks for people who have not done any (little) walking. This is currently funded by Welsh Government. Ways of continuing this activity after the

grant finishes are being explored. Let's Walk Cymru wants to establish links with Ramblers groups so that it can encourage progression from the short walks they organise to the longer walks organised by Ramblers groups.

Groups are reminded that members can attend Area Council meetings if they wish.

5. *Proposed Activities* Ken lead the discussions

- 5.1. The **Christmas Dinner** is at Newport Golf Club on 10 December. We meet at 7pm to eat at 7:45pm.
- 5.2. Peter Elliott's **Christmas Walk and Lunch** at Wetherspoons Ebbw Vale will take place on Sunday 13 December. Peter had done some homework about the possibility of using Wetherspoons Tredegar which was £1 cheaper for the same menu, but found that it was not practicable. A price of £9 covers a main course, a drink *and* a dessert! The train goes from Pye Corner to Ebbw Vale Parkway (fare is not included in the meal price). The walk then follows the Silent Valley Way. Return after the meal from the new station in Ebbw Vale town which is about 10 minute walk from the pub.
- 5.3. The **Christmas Walk and Lunch** will take place at the Hall Inn, Gwehelog on Tuesday 29 December. Fred will circulate the menu when he receives it. The cost will be about £12 for the main course with sweets and drinks extra. The walk features panoramic views from Trostry Common. Meet in the Civic Centre as usual to leave at 9:30am or go directly to the pub where we leave at 10am. The meal should kick off at 1:30 pm or as soon as the walkers are ready after returning.
- 5.4. Dave will lead a **walk celebrating Burns Nicht** on Sunday 24 January, the night before the actual night. Set off from the Civic Centre as usual, but return to Wetherspoons Maindee for haggis with chappit neeps and whiskey gravy *and* a drink for about £5.
- 5.5. A return to **Okehampton** was a popular suggestion. Ken will organise a mid-week stay beginning on Sunday 28 February. Ken will organise the trip.
- 5.6. Ken noted the poor turn-out at the November skittles event and wondered whether support for the event was waning. Members at the meeting pointed to the number of members who had to be elsewhere on the day. The feeling at the meeting was that the event should continue. The next event, at £6.50 per head with a light buffet, will take place at Whiteheads with a 7:30mm start on Thursday 23 March.
- 5.7. Ken noted a gap in events and suggested that we visit **Berkley Castle**, a suggestion that went down well. any further suggestion to Ken.
- 5.8. A **June day trip** to Oxford was so popular the bus was full this year and unusually there were more on the short walk than the long one. This year a return to Oxford or a trip to Stratford were mooted. Dave suggested Leamington Spa and Mike said that there was more to do in Oxford. Finally the meeting decided to go to **Stratford** this time.
- 5.9. Lorna Hall suggested a **July day trip** to Flatholm from Cardiff. Sue Shea suggested a trip to the Welsh Botanical Garden. Ted Clevely said that there was a walk from the Botanical Garden to Aberglasney. The meeting agreed that the Welsh botanical Gardens was to be the venue.
- 5.10. The **Boules Evening** will take place on 19 July as usual organised by Dave with the option of a meal beforehand.
- 5.11. A suggestion that the **Barbecue** could take place somewhere other than Tintern floundered because the facilities at Tintern are so much better than those elsewhere. Sue Shea offered to organise the catering and a date of 7 August was agreed.
- 5.12. Ivor suggested trying to book for **Slimbridge** in October to the agreement of the meeting.
- 5.13. **October week away** Ken will not be organising this event. If we have one we will need a new organiser. The meeting noted this and decided to have a week away. A venue was discussed. Dave suggested that Llandudno was a suitable semi-run-down sea-side venue. Peter Elliott suggested

Newquay. Charles Goodreid went for Llangollen and Linda Westerberg for Paignton. No decision was made.

- 5.14. **Greater Gwent Area AGM and South Gwent Ramblers AGM** After a few suggestions were bandied about, the meeting plumped for the Area AGM at Usk on 6 November (for which Roger will provide a walk) and the South Gwent Ramblers AGM at Ponthir on 20 November to be as suggested by Shiela Holmes and once again Roger will provide a walk.

6. *Election of Officers to the Committee*

Chairman - Ken Phillips

Vice Chairwoman - Phyllis Clayton

Secretary - Colin Wallace

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, Ivor Barclay

Auditor - Denise Humble

Committee members:

Adrian Sheehan, Roger Binding, Steven Atkins, Ivor Barclay

Ken said that his tenure as Chairman and Treasurer must end at the next AGM where we must elect new officers to the posts. Fred stood down as Area Representative and Ivor filled the post. All committee members were elected *nem con*. Roger said that he would "look over Ken's shoulder" this year with a view to taking on the Treasurer's post. Phyllis was not present but Ken reported that she wished to remain in post in the absence of any other volunteer.

South Gwent Ramblers Statement of Accounts 2014/2015

	2014/2015	2013/2014
Opening Balance at 1 October	1,382.59	1128.66
Income		
First Half Year Area Allocation	285.00	390.00
Nov 14 Programme Advert - Ramblers Holidays	60.00	60.00
Mar 15 Programme Advert - Ramblers Holidays	60.00	60.00
Bank Interest	0.57	1.44
Second Half Year Area Allocation	280.00	395.00
The Walking Partnership	50.00	0.00
Total Income	735.57	911.44
Expenditure		
SGR Annual General Meeting Costs	107.10	85.60
Prewalk Expenses	237.57	130.96
Ruperra Trust	25.00	25.00
SGR Walks Programmes	297.40	142.89
SGR Newsletters and Publicity	185.93	100.00
Wales Air Ambulance	50.00	50.00
Administration	363.78	123.06
Total Expenditure	1,266.78	657.51
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-531.31	253.93
Closing Balance at 30 September	851.28	1382.59

Mr K Phillips

Treasurer

Mrs D Humble

Auditor

13/11/2015