

### **South Birmingham Ramblers**

*Draft Minutes of the 25th Annual General Meeting  
held at  
Oddingley Hall  
Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017*

#### **Present**

Liz Walkling, Janet Slater-Hunt, Ted Alcock, Tricia Henley, Norman Hughes, Sandra Nicholson, Rob Swainston, John Tourt  
Val Balmond, Steve Bradley, Jim Butcher, Rosemary Chatfield, Jenny Corless, Geoff Dixon, Kim Duce, Geraldine Fisher, Sue Gould, Margaret Harris, Astrid Laich, Viv Millard, Ray Millard, Steph Miller, Larry Moody, Stephen Nicholson, Moira O'Sullivan, Keith Payton, Isabel Pettitt, Ray Pollard, Peter Rookes, Pat Sack, Frank Sharpe, Sandra Sharpe, Elaine Skellern, Janet Steele, Jan Stefaniak, Carol Stefaniak, Les Stokes, Diane Sutton, Mike Sutton, Joan Taylor, Eleanor Thorne, Gillian Tipton, Maggie Whitlock, Stan Witton, Judy Witton,

#### **Apologies**

John Bowen, Tom Broomhall, Josie Chapman, Conrad Charles, Anna Maria Charles, Margaret Clewett, Marje Davis, Brian Goodkin, Diane Headley, Carol Jilkes, Chris Merryman, Carol Miller, Pam Morris, Dave Morris, Dennis Muxworthy, Anne Payne, John Russell, Jenny Shardlow, Bob Sutton, Katherine Wilcox,

#### **Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Larry Moody proposed that the minutes were correct and Pat Sack seconded. All were in favour and the minutes were signed as correct by Liz Walking. There were no matters arising.

#### **Chairman's Report** – Liz Walking

Recently, while we were out on a walk, a member's lunch box slipped out of her hands and into the canal! It was like the bible story of the loaves and fishes, within moments she was offered more food than she could eat, from other members who were out walking that day. We also managed to hail a passing narrow boat that rescued the lunch box.

At every stage SBR has volunteers who support our group and make it run so well. Our walk leaders, many of whom have taken a navigation course, recce walks carefully and fully understand their responsibilities of care towards the group they are leading.

Rob, our footpath secretary, has encouraged members to report footpath problems to him, or use the app on The Ramblers' website. Tricia has attended the Area meetings in Warwick and brought us back a report of business there and the address labels to send out programmes. Brian has dragged us into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and we now use internet banking for our charity account. Marje, our membership secretary, welcomes new members with a letter and sends them our programme to keeps them in touch with us. Our membership is growing steadily and is now between 340 and 350.

We need three walks secretaries. The weekend walks' secretary, Sandra, organises our Sunday walks and longer Saturday walks in the summer. She also puts our walk programme on to the Ramblers' Website which means we are often joined by walkers from other groups. Ted organises weekly Wednesday walks and monthly Wednesday Workouts for stronger our walkers. John organises short walks. These include a weekly 5 mile walk and some 6 mile

walks at weekends, and of course our summer evening pub walks. Jenny and friends organise and lead regular 2 mile walks for members who are recovering from knee/hip operations and people who are walking for health. John, our publicity officer, puts together the programme for printing.

Norman and friends organise our social events which range from weekends away to a skittles evening to a New Year Lunch. You name it, we've tried it! So much organisation to make these events the success they are. Janet, our secretary, sends out emails about our walks and social events, almost a daily task. She offers valuable advice, books our meetings and helps to ensure that things run smoothly. On our website Ted provides up to date information and photographs.

A good Ramblers' group is enabled by its volunteers, and ours are hardworking, thoughtful and energetic. They help to make us the happy and successful group we are.

For the future we have purchased a printer, and we're encouraging members to download the walks programme from our website, which will save much of the effort of stuffing envelopes each quarter. Next year is our 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.....so watch this space!

### **Secretary's Report** - Janet Slater-Hunt

Janet thanked Liz for an excellent handover and support over the last 12 months. Liz has continued to organise the distribution of programmes which was much appreciated.

Janet's role includes organising the Committee meeting which take place four times a year to report on what has taken place in the previous three months, to discuss plans for the future and to finalise the programme for the next quarter. An almost daily task is maintenance of the SBR mailbox and distribution of walk emails.

Steve Fletcher had done a brilliant job on printing the programme for many years but earlier this year he let us know he was no longer able to continue. This provided us with an opportunity to look at how we could distribute the programme in future and the committee were surprised by how many members were happy to download from the website. We now have fewer copies to print, envelopes to stuff and stamps to purchase, and as Liz has mentioned, we now have a printer. Our thanks to Ted for printing the programme and all the paperwork for this meeting.

The navigation courses run by Derek Jones continue to be very popular with two Level 2 courses and a Level 1 course taking place before the end of the year and a further two Level 1 courses taking place between January and March. Members can apply for reimbursement of the fee after completing the course and leading a walk.

Items to be considered by the incoming committee include:

- Arrangements for First Aid training which will be open for walk leaders
- Data protection issues such as names and telephone numbers on our website, we are expecting some guidance from Ramblers head office and will keep you informed.
- And of course arrangements for our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year.

### **Treasurer's Report** - Submitted by Brian Goodkin

#### **Main (or Charity Account) 01/10/2016 - 30/09/2017**

This account must be used to support the charitable aims of the Ramblers.

## Receipts

	2017	2016
Funding from Area	490.00	550.00
Bank Interest	-	0.64
Advert sales: Ramblers Walking Holidays	200.00	200.00
Walking Partnership: Ramblers Walking Holidays	180.00	230.00
Reimbursement from Social a/c for printing flyers	-	13.00
Other income	10.00	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>880.00</b>	<b>993.64</b>

The bank balance at the beginning of the year was £717.03. We were allocated £490 from the Ramblers central funds via the Area. We earned £200 for including adverts for Ramblers Walking Holidays in our quarterly walks programme. A further £180 was donated to the group by Ramblers Walking Holidays when our members mentioned that they belong to SBR when booking their holidays. Interest is no longer earned on the Group's funds. Last year £13 was transferred from the social account for printing flyers for social events. As we have changed our printing procedures, making this small transfer was not considered worth the effort to apportion these costs.

## Payments

	2017	2016
Production and distribution of walks programmes	639.70	544.47
Walks related activities (maps , attendance sheets)	107.62	17.00
Walks leader training	40.00	80.00
Publicity (website)	39.99	39.99
Committee meetings and AGM room hire and expenses	140.00	156.64
Other administration costs	18.46	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>985.77</b>	<b>838.10</b>
<b>Excess of (payments over receipts)</b>	<b>(105.77)</b>	<b>155.54</b>

During the year we purchased a laser printer for £178.49, which we expect will reduce printing costs during its working life. This expenditure is included in Production and distribution of walks programmes above. The Excess of expenditure therefore includes the acquisition of a continuing asset.

The bank balance at the end of the year was £611.26.

I have requested £810 from Area for 2016-2017. The reason for the increased requirement is firstly the purchase of the printer which was not contemplated for last year's budget, and secondly for Walk leader training as it is intended to run a limited number first aid courses, and several members have commenced Navigation courses, but at the time of budget preparation, no one had reclaimed the course fee, having led a walk.

## Self-funded (or Social) Account

The Social account bank balance at the beginning of the year was £1,188.34. This balance has accumulated from small surpluses arising from the popularity of events and no significant mishaps. A balance needs to be retained for contingencies, and there is often a risk for some events not to break even, and some projects may involve payment in advance. The committee continues to look for ways to reduce the surplus to a reasonable level.

Breakdown of the Social Activities during the financial year

	<b>Income (£)</b>	<b>Expenditure (£)</b>	<b>Surplus (deficit) (£)</b>
<b>Day Walks</b>			
Windsor	510.00	558.50	(48.50)
Buxton	1,560.00	1,531.45	28.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,070.00</b>	<b>2,089.95</b>	<b>(19.95)</b>
<b>Holidays</b>	<b>685.00</b>	<b>296.99</b>	<b>388.01</b>
<b>Social Activities</b>			
Sale of goods	5.00		5.00
Mince Pie walk		106.97	(106.97)
Garden Party		9.04	(9.04)
New Year Lunch	1,295.00	1,332.00	(37.00)
Chinese meal	65.00	64.86	0.14
Quiz	370.00	384.10	(14.10)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,735.00</b>	<b>1,896.97</b>	<b>(161.97)</b>
<b>Administration</b>		<b>24.65</b>	<b>(24.65)</b>
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>4,490.00</b>	<b>4,308.56</b>	<b>181.44</b>

Coach trip costs are mostly fixed so any surplus or deficit is dependent on the number of places booked. We have paid recce expenses at the discretion of the committee. This also applies to Holiday recces. The committee also agreed to use some of the surplus to cover the expenses of the Mince Pie walk, Treasure Hunt and Garden Party. As the travel agent for holidays offers free places, which the committee cannot accept, as it would be a private profit, we have received the equivalent money. Some of this relates to a Holiday in the previous year. The committee is attempting to spend this on the relevant Holiday as was done in respect of Scarborough (gratuity to hotel staff). During the year I incurred postage and telephone costs in setting up telephone and internet banking for this account, which is shown in the table as Administration.

The bank balance at the end of the year was £1,369.78. This is after a room hire payment in advance of £100 (2016 £90) in respect of the New Year lunch. The recipe book is in the course of preparation and the costs of printing and publishing will have to be met in advance of sales.

I am grateful to Denis Muxworthy for examining the accounts and to Moira O'Sullivan for her assistance in handing over the office of Treasurer.

### **Walks Secretaries' Reports**

#### **Short Walks – John Tourt**

This had been another thriving, well supported, and enjoyable year of short walks. There had been 52 mid-week walks in the programme, with only 3 cancellations, due to extremely heavy rainfall, mainly during the spring months. In addition there had been 7 Saturday walks for the short walkers, as well as 3 Friday evening short pub walks – for both short and longer walkers.

John expressed his appreciation of the contribution of walk leaders in delivering the short walk programme with 27 different individuals/couples or groups of three had led walks – involving a total of 40 individual group members.

A number of new walk leaders had led walks during the year and this trend was continuing as there will be three new individuals/groups leading short walks for the first time in the next programme.

John reported that attendance was between 40 and 8, with an overall average turnout of 25. As Saturday walks are not so well attended, John will be seeking feedback from short walkers about week-end walks.

The short walks have continued to have been a good source of new members and for retaining Group members who previously joined the longer walks, which demonstrated the value and benefit of SBR being able to offer such a wide range of walks.

John thanked all group members who had led short walks during the year, and also all the walkers who had regularly taken part in the short walks programme, as well as to Liz Walking, as Chair of the Group, for her support, advice and help during the year.

### **Website Report – Ted Alcock**

The website continues to attract a steady number of visitors, to date we have had around 17,500 hits, this is an increase of 3,000 since last year.

Following the recent opting in to having printed programmes the daily hit rate has increased dramatically as members are now using the website to access walk and social programmes, it will be interesting to see the hit rate over the coming 12 months

One final plea, we need a constant supply of photos for both the website and the programme cover. I would like to thank the small number of stalwarts who send in photos on a regular basis but more are needed, so if you can feel just email them to the address on the website

### **Wednesday Walks – Ted Alcock**

We have again enjoyed wide vary of memorable walks over the last 12 months, (some more memorable than others) ranging over a wide area of the Midlands.

Following requests from last year we again offered our Wednesday Workouts over the summer months and these were generally well supported with an average of 9 – 10 members attending and as I received positive comments, I anticipate that we will be offering the same programme in 2018 providing that leaders come forward with offers of walks.

The conventional Wednesday walks have also been well attended with an average of 35 participants and a high for the year of 48 for Harry's walk at the beginning of the year. I am pleased to say we have had 4 new walk leaders over the past year, a number of whom did so after completing Derek Jones's excellent navigation course.

Finally I would like to thank all those that enthusiastically and also those who not so enthusiastically offered to lead walks. Without them giving their time and expertise where would have been 30 people hanging around Kings Norton car park looking lost every Wednesday.

### **Weekend Walks – Sandra Nicholson**

During the last 12 months there have been 45 walks led by members on Sundays. 6 to 28 people have attended each week and we have had several new members joining us. The walks have been varied and ranged in length from 8 to 10 miles. Two walks were cancelled because of very heavy rain.

In the summer months there were five Saturday walks going further afield to Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, and the Derbyshire Dales. They ranged in length between 10 and 12 miles. Some of these walks attracted up to nine people, including some who hadn't been

on a Saturday walk before. They were a great success and enjoyed by all. Thank you to the people who let them Keith, Julie, Tricia, and Kate.

I would like to thank everyone who has led a Sunday walk during the last year with a special thank you to those who lead a walk willingly in every programme. Also, thank you to those members who have led a walk for the first time.

After three years and six months as weekend walks secretary I feel the time has come to pass the mantle to someone else. I will continue to upload walks onto the National Ramblers website.

### **Social Committee Report** – Norman Hughes

This has been a challenging but rewarding year for the new committee. (It's amazing to think that Val did most of this on her own.) The Quiz night was wonderful; there were two excellent day trips to Windsor and Buxton, a fun skittles night, two meals out and two very enjoyable walking weekends in Tenby and Scarborough and for a select few an enjoyable week in Andalucia. Thanks must go to the walk leaders especially and to the organisers of these events.

Finally we must thank Rose, Eleanor and Sandra for all their hard work now they are stepping down as members of the social committee.

### **Publicity Officer's Report** – Submitted by John Bowen

As in previous years the main aspect of John's role as Publicity Officer has been assembling the quarterly programmes. The walk leaders forward him details of the walks they have arranged for the following three months and other committee members let him have additional information that goes into the programme for the Social Events and General Information sections. He then assembles these details to produce the actual programme before forwarding it to all Committee Members so that mistakes and alterations can be dealt with at our next Committee meeting. When the revisions are complete he forwards the final document to Ted Alcock to print out the programmes and flyers.

He has regular contact with the Ramblers Head Office and communicates information from them to the rest of the Committee.

We advertise our group in local libraries and in Visitor and Community Centres.

We also have on-going advertisements in the local free magazines and during the year he checks that the information is still correct and have the adverts reinstated if they have been missed out. These adverts have proved to be an important means of gaining new members.

John has now begun work on promoting our 25th Anniversary for next year starting with an initial advertisement in 'Walk' Magazine.

### **Footpath Secretary's Report** – Rob Swainston

1. What's happened in the last year ? The Ramblers Society launched their Pathwatch scheme for reporting footpath problems, following a successful national campaign which covered 45% of the country.
2. The Pathwatch programme was launched last November which coincided with my appointment. Their aim was to cover the remainder of the country i.e. 55%, so that all footpaths will be covered by 2020.
3. My objective has been to bring our local reporting processes in to line with the national procedures, starting with a redesign of our walkleaders' recce form .
4. During the year I have sent out a number of emails to outline the Pathwatch reporting process using a computer, or smartphone out in the field .

5. During the year I have received five problem notifications (which I have reported), and I have personally reported 15.
6. The way forward , I am keen to encourage members to report problems electronically (especially walk leaders) , either by computer or smartphone, as I know that a large number of members have such technology . I am happy to host a workshop on this process, as required.

### **Membership Secretary's Report** – Submitted by Marje Davis

We currently have a membership of 346. Since the beginning of November last year we have had 47 new members plus 5 transferring from other groups. We offer an excellent variety of walks and well attended social events and this helps keep the membership level very healthy. All new members now receive a welcoming letter with information about the group.

### **Area Secretary's Report** – Tricia Henley

This, my first involvement in a committee role with the Ramblers, required visits to the quarterly meetings in Warwick followed by attendance at meetings of our group.

The Footpath and Countryside Secretary continues to monitor progress of and defend against possible impacts on footpaths and Rights of Way, currently from local council house building programs.

A well attended Area AGM held in Rugby in February included a short talk from a Ramblers Trustee and a good lunch followed by a short guided walk through some of the historical areas of the town. The next Area AGM in February 2018 will be held in Sutton Coldfield in February.

More sources of short, medium and longer walks were made available via The Warwickshire Centenary Way and the 41Club's Millennium Way details can be found on the respective websites.

A local member Dr Peter Rookes, became a Trustee of the Ramblers General Council and has been invited to attend the Warwickshire Area meetings.

Tricia thanked Liz and the other committee members for their support.

### **Election of Officers**

Two members of the Committee were stepping down - Sandra Nicholson as Weekend Walks Secretary and Tricia Henley as Area Representative. Liz proposed that these two vacancies be considered first and the remainder would be voted in together unless there were any further nominations. There were no further nominations and no objections to this proposal.

Weekend Walks Secretary: Astrid Laich was proposed by Sandra Nicholson and seconded by Sandra Sharpe.

Area Representative: Peter Rookes was proposed by Tricia Henley and seconded by Jenny Corless.

The remainder of the committee was voted in as follows.

Proposed by Les Stokes, Seconded by Larry Moody.

Chair – Liz Walking  
Secretary – Janet Slater-Hunt  
Treasurer – Brian Goodkin

Membership Secretary – Marje Davis  
Short Walks' Secretary – John Tourt  
Wednesday Walks' Secretary – Ted Alcock  
Footpaths' Secretary – Rob Swainston  
Publicity Secretary – John Bowen  
Social Secretary – Norman Hughes  
Webmaster – Ted Alcock will remain as our webmaster.

Dennis Muxworthy had indicated he was willing to stand for the coming year and this was accepted as the new Examiner of Accounts.

All appointments were unanimously agreed by those present.

### **Any Other Business**

#### **SBR 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Arrangements are in hand for events to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of South Birmingham Ramblers.

Eleanor Thorne and Rose Chatfield have made an excellent start with the SBR Recipe Book copies of which were available at the AGM.

A Walking Festival is being planned for 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and the Committee will need the support of the group to make this a success. Promotion of the event has begun with a booking in the festival pages of Walk Magazine.

A members event is being planned for 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018 which will include a series of walks starting in the Lickey Hills or Waseley with everyone returning by 3.00 pm for a buffet meal at The Old Rose & Crown on Rose Hill.

#### **Proposal for Stile Maintenance**

Les Stokes raised the issue of lack of maintenance on stiles and footpaths which appears to be getting worse as local authorities have reduced budgets. He asked if the group thought it was time to consider making repairs ourselves. There was discussion about approvals needed, actions taken by other local rambling groups and guidance available from the Ramblers website. It was agreed that we would need to take a staged approach and Rob Swainston offered to begin by investigating what is happening elsewhere.

Peter Rookes referred to Ramblers charitable status, part of which is to provide a service to the community and this would support that aim.

Peter also referred to a Ramblers campaign regarding land owners rights to divert a path at certain times of the year. Reporting blocked paths will help this campaign.

#### **Role of Walk Leaders**

Stephen Nicholson raised a couple of points about the role of walk leaders and proposed a debate as a way of moving towards clarification.

Stephen understands that a walk leader has a duty of care to go at a pace which is acceptable to the group as a whole. He therefore finds it annoying when walkers seek to push the pace. He would also like clarification as to whether the duty of care is a legal one as well as a matter of good manners and consideration for your friends.

Stephen also understands that if walkers go off on their own they are deemed to have left the group and are no longer the leader's responsibility. He asked what the leader should do when those walkers do not make their position clear.

Stephen asked Liz as chairperson how she wished to proceed.

A number of people at the meeting spoke in support of Stephen's concerns and some suggestions were put forward.

Liz advised that this is an issue which comes up regularly and suggested that there was no benefit in taking this back to the Committee or trying to resolve at this meeting as it is something for the whole membership to be aware of. Liz will circulate the group after the meeting asking that people discuss the issues and send in their comments.

The meeting finished at 8.15 pm.

John Phelps, a volunteer leader with Ramblers Walking Holidays gave a presentation on the variety of holidays offered by this organisation.

Refreshments were available at the end of the meeting and there was great interest in the Recipe Book which was available for people to buy.