

Ramblers Association South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire

Minutes of the AGM held on 28th January, 2012, at Bolsover.

These minutes will be submitted for approval at the 2013 AGM.

Welcome

Rita Reed, Chair of the Bolsover Group, welcomed everyone to the AGM. She introduced Allen Pestell, Acting Chair, David Gadd, Secretary, Gavin Johns, Treasurer, David Hey, President and Robert McKinnon, Head of Marketing, Ramblers.

Present

42 members.

Apologies

Lee Farmery, Neill Schofield, Philip Ryder, Rosemary Boyle, Roly Smith, Jennifer Matkin, Peter Clayton, Sue Haywood and G Haywood.

Notification of Any Other Business.

The Chair was notified of two items.

Appointment of Tellers

Cath MacKay and Mike Pye.

Area President's Address

David Hey said that at the two previous meetings of his Presidency he had talked about the moorland areas and access issues. At his final AGM as President he wanted to concentrate on the magnesium limestone area. He said that there was great variety within a 30-mile area. Bert Ward, of the Clarion Ramblers, had talked about the 'trinity of walking' – the legs, eyes and mind. He said that to appreciate an area you need knowledge of the local and natural history. This area was known for the earliest settlers, at Cresswell Crag, and cropmark photos has established ancient roundhouses from the Iron Age. Ancient routes could still be followed by studying place and field names. Soils on the dip-slopes were very fertile and therefore attractive to early settlers, with nucleated villages and small parishes developing. The Black Death in the 14th century had caused the disappearance of some villages, with Frickley church standing alone as an example. Estate villages developed at Cusworth, Brodsworth, Hickleton, etc. In the 1830/40s some squires re-built model estate villages, such as Hickleton. The development of the coal industry was beneficial to the gentry, who sometimes built pit villages away from their village, Goldthorpe for Hickleton, for example. There was originally a Norman motte and bailey on the site of Bolsover castle. Sir Charles Cavendish bought the old fortress in 1612 and began converting it. His son William inherited it in 1617 and set about its completion. The result is a 'fairy tale' castle, the keep housing tiers of luxurious state rooms. In 1634 Charles 1 was invited to see a Ben Johnson production. He also constructed the Riding House, among the finest indoor riding schools in the country. David finished by saying that Ramblers should rejoice in the wonderful varied scenery and fascinating local history that we have.

Approval of minutes of 2012 AGM

It was proposed by Mike Pye and seconded by Terry Howard that the minutes be accepted. Agreed.

Matters Arising

Terry Howard said that at last year's AGM a motion to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Peak District National Park was carried. He said that although the NP itself could not afford to celebrate the anniversary various activities had taken place by Ramblers Groups.

A second motion, to recognise the 80th anniversary of the Kinder Trespass and the 30th anniversary of the acquisition of Kinder by the National Trust, in 2012, had also been carried. He said that 23 different activities would be taking place in March and April and that a programme would be available soon. A leaflet describing 'The Lord Mayor's Walk', linking the Sheffield Town Hall with the boundary of the Peak District National park, had been produced.

Gavin Johns said that Andrew Milne had agreed to audit the Area's accounts.

Approval of Annual Report

Copies of the report had been widely distributed. Regarding Access, Les Seaman said that a 5-year management programme for the Eastern Moors was under consultation. The Sheffield Moors Partnership is organising three public meetings (22 Feb – Totley; 1 March – Quaker Hall, Sheffield; 13 March – Hathersage). The Sheffield Moors Partnership consists of the National Trust, the RSPB, the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, the Peak district NP, Natural England and Sheffield CC.

Approval of Annual Accounts

The annual accounts had been circulated. Gavin Johns pointed out that £6500 had been received from central office in the last financial year, with £6231 of that money being distributed to the 10 Groups in the Area. It was proposed by Mike Pye and seconded by Les Seaman that the accounts be accepted. Agreed.

Gavin Johns proposed and David Gadd seconded a vote of thanks to Andrew Milne for auditing the accounts.

Elections

Area President: Terry Howard was proposed by Cath MacKay and seconded by Mike Pye. Agreed. CM said that TH was familiar with all that was involved with Ramblers, especially access work and efforts to involve younger people and, by extension, to increase the membership base.

Area Vice Presidents: Roy Cannon, Roy Bullen, John Bunting, Cath MacKay, Mike Pye, Roly Smith and David Hey were proposed en bloc by Malcolm MacKay, seconded by Marion Thompson. Agreed. MM said that these people were the 'elder statesmen' of Ramblers and the countryside, some of whom 'ran the show' for 30 years.

Area Officers: Chair – Allen Pestell (proposed David Gadd, seconded Cath MacKay); Secretary – David Gadd (Cath MacKay/Mike Pye); Treasurer – Gavin Johns (Les Seaman/Allen Pestell).

Area Sub-Officers: Access – Les Seaman (Mike Pye/Terry Howard); IT Officer – Christine Whittaker (David Gadd/Mike Pye); Membership – Jennifer Matkin (Gavin Johns/David Gadd); Countryside – Allen Pestell (Cath MacKay/Gavin Johns).

Members Without Portfolio: Cath MacKay and Terry Howard (Les Seaman/David Gadd).

Lee Farmery, Neill Schofield and Carol Wilkie, Members of Area Council not seeking re-election, were thanked for the contributions to the Area.

Election of members from Affiliated Groups

Cynthia Ashton, from the Sheffield Co-operative Ramblers, and Eric Andrews, from the Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group, were re-elected.

Election of delegates to General Council

Allen Pestell and Terry Howard were elected as delegates to General Council, with Diane Parkin attending as an observer. Judith Gathercole agreed to attend if either of the above people were unable to attend.

Affiliations to Kindred Organisations

Allen Pestell proposed and David Gadd seconded the continuation of affiliation to the Sheffield Campaign for Access to Moorland (SCAM), the Open Spaces Society, the Peak and Northern Footpath Society (PNFS), and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) with the additional organisation known as the Peak District Green Lanes Alliance (PDGLA). Agreed.

The PDGLA is a recently-formed alliance of local councils, horse-riding groups, walking groups including Ramblers, etc formed to try to stop the use of off-road vehicles on rights of way in the Peak District NP.

Edale Mountain Rescue Team presentation

Ian Donaldson gave a slide presentation showing the history and development of the mountain rescue movement in the Peak District. It started in 1928 following the transporting of an injured person using a farm gate. It has developed into seven teams, all members being volunteers and needing good navigation skills, rope skills, and considerable medical knowledge which is supplemented with training. All members need to live locally. The Edale team averages over 100 call-outs a year. Alan Parker then explained the role of 'Friends in High Places'. This organisation helps the MRT with fund-raising and other non-skilled jobs such as casualty training, attending country shows, etc. Joining costs a minimum of £5pa.

Speaker's Address

Robert McKinnon, Head of Marketing from Ramblers central office, gave an up-date on various issues, activities and projects. He said that he believed the decline in membership had been reversed and that the promotion of walking to new audiences was proving successful. The new Chief Executive, Benedict Southworth, takes up his position on 1st February. A new Campaign Director, Nickie Philpotts, had been appointed. It had also been accepted that Julia Bradbury, because of her commitments to the BBC, did not have enough time to commit to Ramblers. However, greater use would be made of different personalities to promote particular projects.

As far as campaigns are concerned, Ramblers continue to work with the Forestry Panel, which is very positive. The 'Red Tape Challenge' set by the government to try to reduce bureaucracy, is a concern; there is the possibility that decisions will be made too fast and the possibility that decisions will be out-sourced to private organisations. The campaign to promote the use of grid references by the emergency services has led to new software being successfully

tested in call centres. The coastal access campaign is ongoing.

As far as projects are concerned thanks are given to Sheffield for its efforts in the Walking Out Campaign. Bids have been made to the Sheffield NHS for a 3-year project funded by the Sustainable Transport Fund to support a walking project. Ramblers have been short-listed to host a 'Walking for Health' project; the result will be known in March.

Ramblers are working with the Macmillan cancer charity to encourage walking for fitness and mental well-being. A project to publish walks in the Royal Parks is taking place.

RM said that the membership was at 114,000 at the end of the year, and now is at 115,000, with 4,000 members having payments in process. However, after one year 50% of new members do not re-join. Members who stay beyond 2 years tend to be long-term members, with 77% remaining for more than 7 years. A major issue is the way Groups make new members welcome, spending time with them, being approachable, etc. Problems with new members turnaround time seem to have been overcome, with a time of 7-10 days being achieved. When new members pay their subscription via direct debit, retention is 80-90%. As from April it will be possible for new members to pay their subscriptions monthly. About 50% of new members join via the website, and Facebook is being used successfully. It is hoped that a members benefit with Cotswold will be increased to 15%, with 20% available for promotions.

Back in the 1970s a dramatic increase in membership occurred with the formation of many new Groups. Ramblers are now trying to introduce Flexigroups, groups established with a specialist interest in photography, archaeology, for dog-walking, etc. So far 8 groups have been established, with 16 in the pipeline.

Research into the joining leaflets will lead to some changes to reflect the age-profile on new members, with bigger printing and the monthly payments being features. In the south-east a 9-month pilot is being tried to co-ordinate activities between Areas and to involve local authorities and local businesses. Ramblers continue to try to improve membership benefits and to improve fund-raising (the Christmas raffle raised £83000 and the coastal appeal raised £70000).

Cath MacKay asked about the link Ramblers had recently established with HF, specifically the effect of money going into the charitable trust, the relationship between Ramblers and Ramblers Worldwide Holidays, and how the issue was handled. RM said that the money going into the Trust was reduced. He said that RWH had been giving less money to the Trust recently; in response to the point that RWH had given over £1m in the last 4 years RM said that £1m had been given in a 10 year period. He said that the relationship between the two organisations had deteriorated, with information sought about the number of members of Ramblers on RWH holidays not being given.

Cath MacKay offered a vote of thanks to Robert for speaking at the AGM.

Motions

There were no motions.

Any Other Business

A proposal was made that a £50 donation be made to the Edale MRT (Les Seaman/Cath MacKay). Agreed.

Closing Remarks

Allen Pestell thanked David Hey for his address and for taking the role of President for the last three years.

He thanked Robert McKinnon for addressing the meeting and up-dating the Area on activities and projects being undertaken by central office.

He thanked Lee Farmery for his Chairmanship over the past 3 years and particularly for his success in bringing younger people into the Ramblers.

Finally, Allen thanked the Bolsover Group for successfully hosting the AGM.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm.

Area Council meetings are on the following dates, with all meetings starting at 7.30pm:

27th February 2012
11th June 2012
10th September 2012
26th November 2012

AGM 26th January 2013

General Council: 21/22 April 2012

Area website: www.synedramblers.org.uk

