

**Minutes of the AGM held on 28th January, 2017 at the Low Bradfield Village Hall, Low Bradfield, hosted by the Sheffield 40s Group**

**Welcome**

Wayne Grounsell, Chair of the Sheffield 40s Group, welcomed everyone to the AGM. He said the Group was formed in 2007, and thus it was celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. The Group has two walks every Saturday and one walk on Sundays. The walks vary from a walk around Chatsworth House gardens to the Black Cuillins of Skye. The Group has recently taken over responsibility for monitoring and maintaining the Sheffield Country Walk. The Group has an active social calendar, with weekends away to the Lake District, Glencoe, etc.

Wayne then introduced David Gadd, Area Secretary, Allen Pestell, Area Chair, Roly Smith, Area President, and Robert Peel, Ramblers Trustee.

**Obituaries**

**David Hey**

David was remembered with affection for his character as a wonderful, kind and thoughtful man, as well as his ability as a local historian who has written many books on the local area. DG read out the first paragraph of the preface of David's latest book 'A History of the Peak District Moors', which reflects David's feelings for the countryside and which all lovers of the countryside share. AP added comments about his meetings with David, who always showed a strong commitment to the work done by Ramblers.

**Roy Cannon**

Roy's commitment to Ramblers was immense. He has been Area chair and was heavily involved in setting-up the Rotherham and the Barnsley and Penistone Groups. He was also involved in the establishment of the Dearne Valley Group and of the of the Bolsover Group. Roy was a very good campaigner and took an active part in several Ramblers campaigns. His funeral was held very recently and a cheque for £480 is being given to Ramblers as a result of the collection at the funeral.

**Ted Ellerton**

Christine Hewitt reported the death of Ted. She said that he was a keen walker all his life and, as a member of Sheffield Group, regularly enjoyed the Group's walks. In his sixties Ted lost his sight suddenly, waking up one morning to the shock of being completely blind. Still determined to continue walking Ted was one of those Sheffield Group members who were instrumental in setting up the Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group.

Cath Mackay asked that letters of condolences be sent.

**Present**

Roly Smith (President), Robert Peel (Ramblers Trustee), and, from Area Council, Allen Pestell (Chair), David Gadd (Secretary), Les Seaman (Access Officer), Christine Whittaker (Information Officer), Cath MacKay and Terry Howard (Members Without Portfolio), Nicki Speakman (Barnsley and Penistone), Philip Lee (Dearne Valley), Judy Gathercole and Angela Coles (Sheffield), Jeremy Kenyon (Sheffield 40s), Christine Hewitt (Sheffield VI Group) and Cynthia Ashton (Sheffield Co-operative Ramblers). There were an additional 27 members present.

**Apologies**

Mike Pye (Vice President), Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Rosemary Boyle and Philip Ryder (Rotherham Metro), Nigel Hebden, Sue and Gordon Haywood (Dearne Valley), Lizzie Jones (Sheffield 20s), Jon Hendy (Chesterfield 20s).

**Notification of AOB**

An emergency motion regarding the Langsett Moors was accepted for debate.

**Appointment of Tellers**

Wayne Grounsell and Cath MacKay were appointed.

**President's Address: Roly Smith**

"I want to start by saying what a great honour it is to be asked to be president of SYNED for what I understand is an unprecedented second time. Led by characters like Bert Ward, Stephen Morton and more recently Terry Howard,

Jack Burling and others, the South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire area of the Ramblers has always been among the most active in the country. It was a leader in the long fight for access and the protection of public rights of way in our countryside.

One of the great sadnesses recently was the demise of the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers in September 2015. But I hope members will be pleased to learn that the spirit of the Clarions lives on with the publication of *Clarion Call*, a book of photographs of early Clarion rambles which also celebrates Sheffield and South Yorkshire's key role in the fight for access to the countryside. The book has been written by Dave Sissons, Terry Howard and myself, and will be launched at the Spirit of Kinder Day at Edale Village Hall on April 22. Among speakers at the event will be Vanessa Griffiths, the new Chief Executive of The Ramblers; Dame Helen Ghosh, Director General of the National Trust and Stephen Trotter, Director of the Wildlife Trusts, England.

We are very grateful to the branch for the grant from Ivy Cowen Legacy which funded the project. The backdrop to my talk today is a selection of some of the slides which will appear in the book...

For over a century, the city of Sheffield has played a leading role in the fight for access to the moorlands of its so-called "Golden Frame," and eventually to the rest of the country. Influential figures in the movement have included John Ruskin, Edward Carpenter, John Derry, Ebenezer Elliot, 'Carolus Paulus' (Charles Paul) and of course the so-called King of the Clarion Ramblers, GHB "Bert" Ward.

It was the Victorian social reformer, artist and critic **John Ruskin** who first described Sheffield as a "dirty picture in a golden frame", centred on its grim steel foundries and back-to-back slums. Like Rome, it is encircled by seven hills, with the majesty of the Peak District's eastern moors on its very doorstep to the west.

Ruskin founded the St George's Museum for the working men of Sheffield, particularly the steel workers he much admired, in 1875. His aim was to take them away from the town's industrial grime, refreshing their minds with the delights of nature and art.

**Edward Carpenter**, the pioneering socialist and aesthete, started his lifelong association with Sheffield during his days as a lecturer in the University Extension movement. Following the death of his parents, Carpenter used his inheritance to buy a seven-acre smallholding at Millthorpe, in the Cordwell Valley west of Sheffield, moving to a house there in 1883.

Millthorpe became home for Carpenter, his many friends and lovers, and eventually a place of pilgrimage for the large number of admirers he attracted during the following four decades. It also became a symbol for the "simplification of life" that Carpenter propounded, which included naturism, working on the land, vegetarianism and the breaking down of class distinctions.

Rotherham-born **Ebenezer Elliott** was known as the Poet of the Poor and the Corn Law Rhymer for his leading role in the fight against the pernicious Corn Laws of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is a statue honouring him in Weston Park.

He also penned many epic topographic poems on South Yorkshire and the Peak, including *Footpaths*, in which he gave his opinion of the Enclosure Commissioners and how their actions had directly affected the lives of ordinary people:

*Wolves with the hearts of devils!*

*They steal our footpaths too!*

*The poor man's walk they take away,*

*Where now, unseen, the flowers are blowing,*

*And all unheard, the stream is flowing:*

*What worse could devils do?*

**John Derry**, editor of the *Sheffield Daily Independent*, wrote *Across the Derbyshire Moors* in 1904 and it was later revised and updated several times by GHB Ward. It includes one of the best descriptions ever penned of the peat morass which then constituted the summit of Kinder Scout "... the most featureless, disconsolate, bog-quaking, ink-oozing moor you ever saw..."

Three years later, "**Carolus Paulus**" (**Charles Paul**) published *Some Forgotten Facts in the History of Sheffield and District: Being an Account of the Attercliffe-Cum-Darnall Inclosure Act*, which outlined the effects of the Enclosure Movement on the parishes surrounding Sheffield:

*It may be imagined that before these Acts were passed the freedom to roam over the moors would be well nigh unlimited, and that the same were used for various beneficial purposes by the inhabitants at large, without fear of trespass.*

And in his *Old English Village*, published in 1912, he added:

*May the time not be too far distant when the wide moorlands shall once more be appropriated for common use, that instead of ministering solely to the pleasures of the rich, they may become the treasure house of the poor and the barren but picturesque remnants as the breathing spaces for many.*

All these and others had a profound influence on **Bert Ward**, who founded the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers Club, which he claimed was the first working class ramblers group in the country, after a 20-mile walk round Kinder Scout in September 1900. This year (2017) marks the 60th anniversary of Ward's death, and our book shows many of the earliest Clarion rambles, with a commentary by Dave Sissons.

\* \* \*

So where do we go from here? The long-cherished access to mountains and moorland was achieved with the CROW Act of 2000, but many changes are still taking place on the moorland: some good and some bad.

In November, despite a determined campaign and a petition signed by more than 123,000 people, the government dismissed calls by leading environmentalists for a ban on driven grouse shooting. Landowners were accused of killing protected predators such as hen harriers which threaten grouse populations. Heather burning to improve grouse habitat undoubtedly also contributes to a monoculture of heather at the cost of other vegetation and wildlife.

Other questionable recent developments have included paths and bridleways being surfaced for vehicle access, supposedly to carry out moorland restoration, and plastic matting laid for vehicle access, such as that on the Cut Gate track described by Les in his emergency motion. The question is: are they temporary or permanent?

It's not all bad news though. The good news is that bodies such as Moors for the Future and the National Trust are now actively "re-wilding" large areas of Peak District moorland. For example, over the last five years, the National Trust has installed over 6,000 dams on its 15-square-mile Kinder estate.

These hand-built dams slow down the water which would normally race down the grips, groughs and gullies and into the rivers below. They have raised the water table on the moor, allowing the water to gradually trickle off the land, thus increasing the capacity of water the moor can absorb in Kinder's frequent heavy rains, and alleviating the risk of flooding further downstream.

And aided by a massive £14 million EU LIFE Programme grant, the Moors for the Future partnership will protect and transform 36 square miles of active blanket bog through re-vegetating bare peat, improving hydrology and diversifying existing vegetation in the Peak District and South Pennines.

I'll leave the last word to Bert Ward, taken from the 1914-15 Clarion Handbook:-

*Were I a God I would make a new race of men and women – and I would make them free. There would be none rich and none poor; and the earth, and the beauty of the earth, would belong to all and all would know how to enjoy it.*

And from the 1911-12 Handbook:-

*And how would the new race of men and women enjoy it if they lived in or around Sheffield? There are fifty square miles of hill and moor in which to wander free – and who shall say me nay? And ever beyond those prison factory walls I hear that call of Heather Land of mine; Little boy, come again, and be thou free.*

Thank you, Mr Chairman.”

### **Approval of the minutes of the 2016 AGM**

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting. These were approved as being correct. Proposed by Terry Howard and seconded Jez Kenyon. Agreed.

### **Matters arising from those minutes**

AP gave an up-date on the last General Council. A motion against the governance proposals made by Central Office, proposed by the Kent Area and seconded by SYNED, was carried.

### **Annual Report**

The Annual Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. The report contains the Role of Area, it's prime aim being to support the Groups. The continued slow decline in membership was noted, although with the establishment of the Sheffield 20s and 40s Groups, the total number for Sheffield had increased. It was felt that there was less awareness of what Ramblers does in recent years, by our members as well as by the general public. The decline in the number of walking groups affiliated to Ramblers was noted. The need for communication, within the membership and from Ramblers to the public, was noted.

Terry Howard proposed and Neill Schofield seconded that the report be accepted. Agreed.

### **Approval of the Annual Accounts**

In the absence of the Treasurer, the Secretary reported that SYNED had received £6,000 from Central Office last year and had distributed £4,442 to Groups in the Area. The Area spent approximately £1,200 on administering the Area, including the production of the Annual Report. £532 (the balance) was paid to the Peak District National Park for their Access Fund. We received £42,748 from the Ivy Cowen Trust as our share of the Trust residual funds. It was confirmed that the legacy is a 'restricted funds', for the use of SYNED only. The accounts were approved. Proposed by Philip Lee and seconded Cath MacKay. Agreed.

### **Election of Officers**

President: Roly Smith was proposed by Malcolm MacKay and seconded by Les Seaman for his third and final year.

Vice Presidents: Mike Pye, Cath MacKay and Terry Howard were elected en bloc. Proposed by Judy Gathercole and by seconded Jez Kenyon..

The following, proposed by Neill Schofield, seconded by Judy Gathercole, were elected en bloc: Allen Pestell (Chair/Countryside), David Gadd (Secretary/Membership Secretary), Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Les Seaman (Access). Christine Whittaker was re-elected as Information Officer; Jez Kenyon agreed to investigate further support.

Affiliated representative: Christine Hewitt (Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group).

Co-opted member: Cynthia Ashton (Co-operative Ramblers).

Members Without Portfolio: Cath MacKay, Terry Howard.

All nominations were agreed by the membership.

### **Affiliation to Kindred Organisations**

LS explained that SYNED pays a subscription, and therefore is affiliated to, the Peak District Green Lanes Association, the Open Spaces Society, the Peak and Northern Footpath Society and the Council for the Campaign to Protect Rural England. These are like-minded organisations we wish to support and occasionally to seek advice from.

Proposed by Jack Burling and by seconded by Arthur Button. Agreed.

## **Motions**

1 Les Seaman explained that some plastic matting had been laid down on the boggy moors in the Langsett area to enable grouse-shooters to reach the grouse butts. This matting is extremely unsightly and in some areas it is being destroyed by the vehicles using it. It is obviously a man-made product, totally alien in this situation. The matting was paid for by Natural England i.e. public money was used. Retrospective planning permission is being sought on 2nd February.

The following motion was proposed by LS and seconded by Cath MacKay and passed unanimously:

“This AGM deplores the imposition of the plastic matting over the moorland from Lost Lad, Midhope Moors over the Mickleden Beck to the Grouse Butts. It supports the removal of this plastic matting road and any enforcement action needed for its removal and restoration work to be carried out. We ask that the Peak District National Park Authority takes the appropriate action”.

2 This Ploughing and Cropping Motion was proposed by Terry Howard and seconded by Jez Kenyon and passed unanimously:

"This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to find ways to reduce the impact of ploughing and cropping on the path network, and to engage with the relevant parties to ensure any new legislation regarding this is practical, effective and enforceable."

Background notes:

"Ploughing and cropping of PROW, and failure to correctly reinstate them, is a significant and growing problem. There is also a lack of enforcement of the existing legislation - legislation that is very likely to change following Brexit.

There are a variety of approaches throughout the country, such as the recent Shropshire collaboration with their ROW department but we need a 'national approach' to support the local initiatives.

One suggestion would be for Ramblers to push for a 'standard approach' based on best practice, and write to councils offering a collaboration to address this growing problem. This could also be turned into a national campaign, built upon the data gathered via PathWatch, and for example working together with the NFU and CLA to promote best practise.

Ramblers also should be strongly involved in the creation of any new legislation regarding ploughing and cropping and protecting the ROW network."

Jack Burling said that the real problem was the lack of enforcement of present legislation but it was felt that a national approach from Ramblers would be beneficial, particularly bearing in mind what might happen post-Brexit, when the situation could be significantly worse than it is at the moment.

## **Delegates to General Council**

AP and TH agreed to be the delegates for SYNED at General Council in Southampton over the weekend of 1-2 April.

Area Council would be delighted to cover the costs of a third person to attend General Council. This person would go as a non-voting visitor. Anybody interested should contact the chairman.

## **The Role of Groups**

The Role of Groups document had previously been circulated. We discussed the role of Groups and Area, and decided we needed to bring together the various documents that have been presented, into a coherent whole, which would include an outline of the varied and extensive work Ramblers volunteers in the SYNED region undertake and aspire to undertake, and also the mechanics necessary to operate our Groups and Area.

## **Speaker's Address: Robert Peel, Ramblers Trustee**

Robert had been asked to talk about issues connected with the establishment of the South-East Walker. This newsletter covers nine Areas in the south-east and is distributed quarterly with *Walk* magazine. It is printed on A3-sized paper and consists of 16 pages. Most Areas in the south-east subscribe to it. The number of copies of SE Walker, per quarter, was 22,693 at a cost of £2811. Kent pays around £1500 to £1700 per year, with four copies delivered to each of around 3,200 addresses. Thus the cost is around 50p per address per year or 12.5p per copy.

Groups and Area submit material to the editor and he compiles the newsletter before sending it off to the printer, who finishes the editing process.

Robert said that there were difficulties with the logistics of the distribution, in ensuring that the SE Walker was put in the correct envelopes with *Walk*. However, so far, this seems to be accepted. No charge is made for this distribution system. It is recognised that it would be too expensive to distribute the newsletter any other way.

It's distribution fulfils the Area's obligation to communicate with all members twice yearly. Prior to the production of the SE Walker, communication with non-walkers and members with no email had been limited to once a year. It is a good vehicle for promoting books, a recent Kent Area publication having sold several hundred copies after being promoted in the newsletter. Robert noted that no attempts had been made to get commercial advertising into the newsletter. Also that since the production of the newsletter membership in Kent had initially flat-lined and then stated to rise slightly; he accepted that this rise may not be connected with the newsletter.

After the presentation on the SE Walker Robert moved on to the Central Office presentation, encouraging members to comment and ask questions. The first point made was that volunteers are vital to Ramblers, a point appreciated by members. Robert pointed out that the Ramblers 'Vision and Strategic Framework 2015-25' was on the website; however members commented that this was 'managerial waffle'. Robert said that in the last few years the number of maintenance teams helping to maintain the rights of way network has increased massively. Lobbying in London prior to the mayoral election has led to the mayor appointing a Commissioner for Walking, the process of appointment is going on at the moment. Thoughts were requested about Pathwatch. Robert said that, despite its flaws, it had facilitated a lot of publicity. Flaws noted were that the process didn't fit in with reporting to RoW Departments and questions were raised about what local authorities thought of the project. With time running out, he moved on to the Don't Lose Your Way scheme, explaining that we had until 2026 to claim and public rights of way which existed in 1949, the start-date of definitive maps. We discussed the fact that some authorities publish their Definite Map online and others don't and that there were many discrepancies between definitive maps, the 1:25,000 and the 1:50,000 series of OS maps. The National Library of Scotland website was considered to be a particularly useful source of information ([www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk)). It was pointed out that SYNED has put money aside for Lost Ways expenses, including, possibly, paying someone to do some research in the National Archives, Kew. Robert finished by saying that it was hoped that a law would be passed recognising that paths in use in 2026, generally 'white lanes', will not need to be claimed.

### **Vote of Thanks**

Cath MacKay offered a vote of thanks to all attendees, to the President, Roly Smith, the Trustee, Robert Peel, as well as to the Sheffield 40s Group for successfully hosting the event.

2017 ACROW meetings start at 6.30pm and Area Council meetings start at 7.30pm  
All meetings are held in the Quaker Meeting House, St James Street, Sheffield S1 2EW.  
6th February  
5th June  
4th September  
20th November

2017 "Spirit of Kinder" 2.00pm, 22nd April, Edale Village Hall

2018 AGM: 2.00pm, Saturday, 27th January  
Rotherham Metro to host.

Area website: [www.synedramblers.org.uk](http://www.synedramblers.org.uk)  
National website: [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)