

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT ALTON METHODIST CHURCH

ON TUESDAY 7TH NOVEMBER at 7.pm.

The meeting commenced with a talk by Abby Sullivan & Emma Broadbent, HCC Countryside Access Rangers.

Present: Chester Whapshare, Chairman.

Trevor Plumbley, Treasurer.

Rosemary Cornick, Secretary.

Anthony Collins, Membership Secretary.

John Jones, Website Officer/Programme Secretary.

Rob Hannah, Footpath Secretary.

Roy Kirby, Social Secretary.

And 24 members of the Alton Ramblers.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Gill & Trevor Evans, Jennifer Rigby, Ling Barrett, Robin Hamilton, Stephen Thompson, Fin Gordon, Judy Aiken, Howard Linsley, Caroline Lemka, Helen & Eric Smith, Mary McAllister, Tony May and Graham Titterington.
2. **MINUTES OF THE AGM** held on Thursday 10th November 2016 were proposed by Anthony Collins, seconded by Roy Kirby and accepted.
3. **MATTERS ARISING:** Evening Walks – The Committee had discussed the evening walks and it had been decided not to continue with them. There had been two pub walks in the evenings in their place during the summer programme.
4. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** – Chester Whapshare reported as follows:

This year we have taken a break from first aid map reading courses which we have run for the last two years and the group holiday failed to get off the ground. We remain members of the Alton and District Sports Council and support their campaign to improve the Sports Centre.

As corporate members of the Alton Town Twinning Association, 10 of the Group made a visit to Pertuis in Provence where we were hosted by the same 'Randonneurs' who came to Alton last year. We enjoyed 3 days of walking in very warm conditions and 4 evenings of entertainment. Next year some of the Mille Pattes group will come with us to Hadrian's Wall.

When the Alton Walking Festival took place we led one walk during the week. Next year the Festival is due to last for the whole of the month of May and we are making available our entire walking programme for the event.

Rob Hannah came with me to the General Council at Southampton University where we helped with the arrangements and made a few friends. I have represented the Group at all of the Area Council Meetings and I attended the Area AGM with Rosemary.

The Alton Group remains healthy in spite of dwindling membership. We held a successful leaders meeting. Our walks seem to have generated a good reputation and we enjoy the company of several members from other counties who claim that we are a more friendly Group.

Penny Cushing thanked Chester for all the work he had done over the last 3 years as Chairman.

5. TREASURERS REPORT.

Trevor Plumbley presented the Accounts for the year ending 30th September 2017. He gave the following report:

Copies of the 'Profit and Loss Accounts' and the 'Statement of Assets' are available to members.

MAIN – INCOME.

There were three main sources of income – an allowance from Central Office, book sales and a “kick-back” payment from Ramblers Holidays in respect of holidays booked by group members. (Our thanks to our members who mentioned belonging to 'Alton Ramblers' when booking!)

The book sales still provide a major source of income to the group, though sales are down on last year. It is noted that the Alton Group would be short of funds without this income.

MAIN – EXPENDITURE.

Our regular major expense is that of printing and postal distribution of Walk Programmes. The committee is continuing to encourage members to receive these by email rather than distributing printed copies to further reduce these costs.

The group has funded only one First Aid Course during the year and has not had held any map-reading courses, reducing our 'Walk Leader Training' costs. A 'Walk Leaders' Meeting' was held again this year at a similar cost to last year.

SELF-FUNDED ACTIVITIES.

Our self-funded activities (the enjoyable social events) during the year, targeted to break even, show a small profit on the “receipts and payments” snapshot view basis of the accounts. It is to be noted, however, that we paid a £50 deposit for the New Year lunch in the previous year's accounts, and also that we were not billed for the Quiz Night room hire. These items would account for the majority of the surplus shown. Also included in our self-funded activities is our subscription fee to ATTA (Alton Town Twinning Association).

RESTRICTED –FUNDS.

We are grateful for the substantial grant of £1540.49 received this year from HCC for the purchase of a brushcutter and for training operators. We have also contributed £39.56 from our own funds to this. It is a great boost for our volunteer workforce enabling them to greatly increase their capacity to clear overgrown footpaths in our area. (Many thanks as well are due to our volunteers!)

OTHER.

- a) In the coming year we have set aside £2000 for re-printing of the 'Walks from Alton' book. This reduces our "Reserves Ratio" (money we have in the bank divided by our annual expenditure) to an acceptable level for continued allocations of funds from Central Office.
 - b) The accounts have been submitted to The Ramblers Area Treasurer in the required Ramblers Association spreadsheet format.
 - c) The accounts have been examined and approved by Mrs Elspeth Mackegg Gurney on 28th October 2017.
- The Accounts were proposed by Roy Kirby, seconded by John Jones and adopted by all.

6. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER FOR 2018.

Elspeth Mackegg Gurney had agreed to undertake the duty of Independent Examiner for another year.

7. REPORTS .

7:1 PROGRAMME SECRETARY – John Jones reported as follows:

It was very pleasing that the 2016/2017 Winter/Spring programme was filled and that we had new walk leaders taking part: Anne, Tim, Vicky, AJ and a stalwart example from Fin who took 4 walks.

The Summer programme was eventually well filled after a slow start to submissions. There were some gaps, three of which were filled at short notice: two by Ray and Diana and one by Sue Rogers. And I am very grateful to them!

The 2017/2018 Winter/Spring programme still had seven midweek walk vacancies when it went to press. They are still available for hardy winter walk leaders.

On a more positive note, we can welcome three more leaders, Louise, Eileen, and Judy. This means we now have 32 active leaders to contribute to our normal walking list of 44 walks.

7:2 WEBSITE OFFICER – John Jones reported as follows:

The underlying template for the website has been improved so the view will now fill the window on the screen to give a more spacious look.

The Walking Partnership have changed their brand logo.

I have started putting significant News & Events on the front page for impact. Currently this refers to the Alton Waking Festival.

New under the Walks tab you can find an option "Walking and Routes Information" where useful information which may help when walks are put together can be found: such as permissive paths not marked on the OS maps, long term obstructions or unofficial deviations. If you find anything which may help other walk leaders, please let me know and I will add your comments to this section.

Photographs: I would like more photographs from members other than me for the website: not less than 1Mb in size to ensure good quality.

7:3 MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY –Anthony Collins reported as follows:

Here are some membership and walks details for the past Ramblers years: 1st October 2016 – 30th September 2017.

NATIONALLY - Ramblers national membership has reduced by 1437 members to 104694. (-1.3%)

BY AREA – Hampshire has reduced slightly by 85 members to 4183 and just remains the 4th largest in the UK. (-2%)

BY GROUP – Alton membership stands at 211 compared with 220 last year, a net reduction of 9 representing a drop of 4%. This compares with a net loss of 22 members last year. So we have had 12 new members (less than last year), there have been 2 reinstated and we have lost 23 through resignation, transfer from area or non-payment (mainly the latter) compared with 43 last year.

So overall, membership continues to fall but at a slower rate than in the past.

WALKING STATISTICS.

There have been 127 planned walks compared with 132 last year of which 6 needed leaders and 2 were cancelled because there were no walkers. So net, 119 actually took place. The total number walking for the year was 1331 compared with 1517 last year so giving an overall average of 11 people over completed walks compared with 11.9 last year.

So for this year:

Short down 9 (-159) Ave 13 per walk. Long/mid down 32 (+32) Ave 4.5 per walk. Evenings down 50 (-41) Ave 6 per walk. (Only, 2 walks) Sundays down 42 (+86) Ave 11 per walk.

Once again, clearly reducing membership results in fewer walk leaders, fewer organised walks and fewer walkers. Of our membership of 211, I estimate that about 60 members walk more than 5 walks a year, so about 28% of total membership. We were joined though the year by 220 visitors.

Over the year we have lacked 4 short walk leaders, 2 long/midweek leaders and 0 Sunday walk leaders making a total of 6 walks which is actually an improvement on last year. I note though that in the current programme, out of 44 walks available there are 4 long, 2 medium and 1 short needing leaders. As ever my thanks go to all walk leaders and also for sending me their walk numbers so enabling me to give you the statistics. Please let me know if you change your e-mail address.

The results for our most active walkers over the past year are: In 3rd place Carol Jones 43 walks. In 2nd place Alf West 45 walks. In 1st place Lynn Frances 58 walks. 553.1 miles.

7:4 FOOTPATH SECRETARY – Rob Hannah reports as follows:

Firstly I must thank all those who have helped and supported me during this busy year. This includes Abby and Emma who have kindly agreed to give up their own time to tell us about their important roles as Countryside Access Rangers (engagement).

The 28 members of the Working Groups have been indefatigable in clearing vegetation and improving much waymarking. Some attend almost every week, rain or shine. Not only that but they have willingly taken part on joint working and learning with the CA Rangers on steps, a 10 metre board walk and sleeper bridges. We have a 5 meter bridge to build in Kingsley shortly.

How have we done? We have completed 719 volunteer hours this year. That is equivalent to 15 hours a week – roughly 2 days a week for a 48 week. Abby and Emma give us printouts of vegetation and waymarking problems in our patch which is very helpful. We can fix them within a few weeks, sometimes days. We can be pretty adaptable.

Something else very helpful: we have acquired a brushcutter (free from HCC) and a push along motor mower – gifted by Emma. Having seen how effective high folding hedge trimmers can be we are looking to request one through CA Rural Grant Scheme.

Two other groups that deserve a mention are The Parish Wardens and The Surveyors.

Getting early problem information from Wardens is so helpful: Diana told me of a riverbank collapsing and a fallen tree just in Binsworth and they were fixed within 3 weeks. Chester has recently informed me about vegetation, broken post and obstruction. We will fix them soon.

7:5 PUBLICITY OFFICER – Chester Whapshare reported as follows:

Advertisements for Alton Ramblers still placed in Library and Community Centre. The programme is also in the file in the library.

Weekly list of Ramblers to Moria at the Alton Herald. Round and About wanted about £80 for business card size advert. I considered this excessive, but I will get back to them and check if they can include our schedule.

We set up our stall at the Lindford fete which was chosen because of the help available.

The Four Marks Festiwell was a much bigger success for us and we did well with several people keen to join. Sadly we failed to follow up on our leads and suggest that we picked them up for a walk. Sadly my appeal for help on the day fell on deaf ears but Mui and Cathy came and we put up a good show.

The photos were a big draw and although we did not run a competition to guess where they were, people were attracted to our stall by them. We talked about the places on the pictures and tried to find them on our maps. 8 “Walks from Alton” books were sold.

Jean Lee asked if a report of the AGM could be sent to the Alton Herald. Also a mention of the work Rob and his voluntary team have done.

7:6 Social Secretary – Roy Kirby reported as follows:

Since the last AGM there have been four Social Events, a slight increase on the previous year.

The New Year Lunch at the Alton House Hotel was attended by 33 Ramblers, a decrease of 5 on the previous year. As usual we enjoyed good food and service as well as good company. The details and menu for the coming year’s lunch has already been detailed in our current Newsletter. I hope to see many of you there.

Our Quiz plus Fish & Chips Supper saw an increase in numbers up to 31 as opposed to 28 Last year. As usual the quizmaster had to contend with various challenges to his questions, but it was all done in a friendly manner, and everyone seemed to enjoy it all.

Our summer barbecue went well until a heavy shower of rain interrupted proceedings. Fortunately, everyone had eaten and we were under cover, so no harm was done. Twenty nine people attended and for once there was no walk to precede the event, as no one volunteered to lead one. Our thanks go to Gill and Trevor Plumbley for hosting the event.

The final event of the year was a Skittles Night at the Jolly Farmer at Blacknest. We had 25 players including 3 Canadian guests of the Chairman. He impressed them and all present with his skill and

won the men's competition after a playoff against Anthony Collins. Sue Rogers was the ladies winner by a narrow margin.

I thank all of those who support these events and trust that you will continue to do so.

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

The following officers were elected on block.

POST	NAME	PROPOSED BY	SECONDED BY
Deputy Chairman	John Jones	Ray Wood	Jean Lee
Treasurer	Trevor Plumbley		
Membership Secretary	Anthony Collins		
Footpath Secretary	Rob Hannah		
Programme Secretary	John Jones		
Website Officer	John Jones		
Publicity Officer	Chester Whapshare		
Social Secretary	Roy Kirby		

NB. The following were not elected on block

Chairman	AJ Barlow	Lynn Frances	Anthony Collins
Secretary	Libby May	Diana Wood	Penny Varnam

Thanks to Lynn Frances co-opted to take Committee meeting minutes

Walking Environment Officer Vacant.

These elections were unanimously accepted by all.

9. WALKS SCHEDULE.

There had been a number of discussions about changing the number and pattern of midweek walks as it is proving difficult to find enough leaders to complete a programme.

In the current programme there are 44 walks in total with 27 in the midweek and 17 on Sundays. There are 31 active leaders who contribute. 11 do Sundays, 16 week days and 6 both. However, for any one programme only 18 contribute one or more walks, 8 two or more and 2 stalwarts more than three: which means we always barely cover the required number of leaders for walks.

The popularity of the types of midweek walks are, midweek short 12, midweek medium 13, midweek long 4, which shows that long midweek walks are not as well taken. All the midweek days are fairly equally popular for all types of walks with the exception that long walks are much more preferred on Thursdays.

The number of walkers per walk length are: Tuesday: short 101, medium 100 long 81.
Wednesday: short 87, medium 119, long 27. Thursday: short 112, medium 106, long 43.

The main complaint at the last meeting was the conflict between long and short walks on the same day. The proposal is to have a long and short walks on separate days, and to observe if this increases interest in long walks

A slide of the new schedule was shown. The number of walks per week follows the current pattern, first week short and long, second week medium, except that the short and long walks were shown on different days. The new schedule will be put into effect for the summer autumn programme as the current scheme has had to be used for the Walking Festival in May due to the need to confirm early our walks for the Festival.

The proposal was unanimously agreed and adopted.

There was some discussion on the length of walks. Should a short walk be up to 5miles, medium 5-7 miles and a long 7+. The Committee to discuss.

Action Committee.

10. FESTIVAL OF WALKS.

Alton Festival of Walks is for the duration of May 2018. Walks published in the walks programme for May 2018 will be part of the Festival of Walks. It was felt that this would be a good way of publicizing the Ramblers and as most of the walks will be from "Walks from Alton" book a good advert for the book. There were only 3 midweek walks still needing a leader. The meeting place for walks would be in Alton. Dogs would be allowed on leads. The leader to take name and telephone contact from none Rambler members. Each walk had been allocated 15 non-members and 15 members. A member would be needed for back marking on each walk. Alton Town Council would like the information by December.

Rob asked if leaders when receiving walks could report any problems so he and the voluntary team could clear path before the Festival.

11. HAMPSHIRE RAMBLER.

Due to lack of articles the Hampshire Rambler had not been published. Area had asked whether members would like to receive information via emails or the website. Members agreed that information via the website would be the preferred option.

12. CASCADE OF BULLETINS FROM CENTRAL OFFICE.

It was agreed that the Chairman and Secretary should use their discretion when forwarding emails from Ramblers Central. Only forwarding essential information.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

Lynn Frances mentioned that two people had transferred from other groups and were now leading Sunday walks.

Diana Wood asked if the restrictions on parking at Anstey Park would be lifted during the Walking Festival. Jean Lee also queried if we were still able to park at Alton Health Centre car park on a Sunday as wheel clamping operates in the area. AJ to write and ask if permission is still available.

Action AJ

A query was asked on insurance during the Walking Festival. Insurance would be covered by Alton Town Council.

Stuart Tuttlebury offered his leader guidance and map reading notes to anyone interested. Trevor reported that he was in the process of condensing and combining the notes with those from Ramblers Central. They would then be put on the website.

Action Trevor

The meeting closed at 9:50

MINUTES APPROVED.

Chairman

A. G. B. B.

Date

22.10.18

Secretary

hy - Franc

Date

22.10.18