

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ALTON RAMBLERS GROUP
HELD AT ALTON METHODIST CHURCH
Monday 22 October 2018 at 7pm

The meeting commenced with a talk by Helen Dudley from Walk Alton.

Present: AJ Barlow, Chairman
Trevor Plumbley, Treasurer
John Jones, Programme Secretary/Website Officer
Rob Hannah, Footpath Secretary
Roy Kirby, Social Secretary
Chester Whapshare, Publicity Officer
Plus 26 members of Alton Ramblers

1. Apologies for absence

A and S Collins, D and R Woods, L Barrett, G Titterington, C Lemka, V Woods, S Tuttlebury, J Rigby, T Evans, G Evans, A Noon, J Aiken, J Lee, J Dyson, P Varnam, P and S Hinde, Carol Whapshare, G Plumbley.

2. Acceptance of the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2017

Accepted unanimously

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

AJ confirmed can use Health Centre CP Sunday
Trevor has Stuart's walk leaders' notes and they have been issued to leaders.
Re the discussion about the lengths of walks that we should be organising, the Committee decided that we should keep the walk lengths the same as in previous years.

4. Chairman's Report

My initial year as Chairman has for me been fun and interesting, and I am proud of what we have done over the year. Highlights include:

- 1) A healthy continuation of our walks programme with the new staggered longer walk schedule, which has proved successful in terms of increasing walker numbers.
- 2) Our active participation in the Alton Walking Festival, where we offered our entire walk schedule, 13 walks, in the month of May for the public to join us. We even recruited some new members and sold a significant number of our *Walks from Alton* book. I hope we can replicate this success in 2019.
- 3) 18 of us joined our town-twinning friends from Pertuis in France for a week-long hiking holiday along Hadrian's Wall. What a success!- good weather, good company and scenery, and even complimentary remarks from our French guests about the food quality! We do hope to plan another holiday in 2019, but details will come later.
- 4) We have successfully published the next edition of our *Walks from Alton* book, and this is now in the local shops etc. This is of great benefit to us, allowing us to supplement our contributions from HQ, and so fully recompense our vital footpath maintenance volunteers for their expenses. Trevor will be circulating a revised form for claiming expenses and will suggest an appropriate car mileage rate to the committee for discussion. **Action TP**
- 5) I have pushed to tighten up our procedures for member's data protection (new GDPR regulations now apply to Ramblers), walk leading and safety without hurting the fun we have on great walks in our excellent countryside. Further to that, we will be holding a "Training for Walk Safety" session on March 4th 2019, open to all, especially walkers thinking of becoming walk leaders, to allow them to get a feel for the leading role before any decision.

I want to thank you all for a great welcome as your new Chairman, you've managed to put up with me for this long..... Thank you all for your continued support of our group, the footpath volunteering and the actual walks in particular - without the walks, what are we here for? Finally, I also especially want to recognise and thank our retiring committee members, Libby and Roy for their great service to us over several years.

I am looking forward to our coming year and some great walks!
Thank you.

5. Treasurer's Report and Adoption of Accounts

This report covers the 12 months to 30 September 2018.

The Profit and Loss Account, Balance Sheet and the Statement of Assets are presented in Appendix I.

Main – Income

As previous years, there were three main sources of income - an allowance from Central Office, book sales and 'donations' from Ramblers Walking Holidays in respect of holidays booked by group members.

The income from the books, however, has provided **the** major source of income to the group, and looks particularly impressive this year. The Alton Walking Festival created an interest in the books and all the remaining copies of the old edition were sold. In addition, the new edition has generated income both from advertising and sales with retailers of the book having paid up-front for their copies rather than taking them on a 'sale or return' basis previously adopted for some outlets. These revenues have all been captured in the presented accounts and we might therefore expect an apparent drop in revenue in next year's accounts. It is noted this income has totally covered the cost of the print run of the new edition.

We are grateful to Sarah and Patric Hinde for their efforts in updating and selling both the books and the advertising therein. It is again noted that the Alton Group would be short of funds without this income.

Main – Expenditure

Our regular expenses of printing and posting of Walk Programmes have been controlled by maximising the distribution of the electronic version by email. The Committee is grateful to those who have accepted the electronic version and helped to minimize our overheads. The Committee is continuing to encourage members to receive these by email if they can.

A Walk Leaders' Meeting was held again this year at a similar cost to last, but we have not spent on any training courses.

As mentioned above, the major expenditure this year was in the printing of the new edition of the *Walks from Alton* books. As mentioned above, however, the costs have, remarkably, been completely covered by the income generated.

Also to be mentioned is that our volunteer workforce, having been clearing pathways, way-marking etc. have not generally been claiming expenses and hence minimal expenditure is shown under 'Practical Work' which does not reflect the amount of work done. While the Committee is also grateful for this, we shall be encouraging the volunteers not to be out-of-pocket in the future! Hopefully this good work will continue. A form will be produced to claim expenses and the mileage rate will be checked. **Action TP**

Self-Funded Activities

Our self-funded activities (the enjoyable social events) during the year, targeted to break even, show a small profit over the year.

Restricted Funds

We have had no restricted funds this year.

Other

a) In the coming years we have set aside £2000 for the purchase of more kissing gates and to support our volunteers in both installing them and supporting them in other work. 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 Mr Steven Ditcham on 10 Oct 2018.

d) A separate Asset Register is kept of items owned by the Alton Group and is available to members. Accounts were approved by those attending.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2019

Steve Ditcham was proposed.

7. 2018 AGM Reports by:

7.1 Programme Secretary

According to my list we have 29 leaders to fulfil about 43 walks per programme. This means that half the leaders need to lead two walks for every programme to be filled. Obviously not all leaders are able to do walks on all programmes, so we are always grateful to the leaders who do more than two walks. Last Winter's walk programme had 5 vacancies. The Spring and Summer walks had only one vacancy each, and the coming Winter programme has no gaps! So I must thank you all and especially those leaders who have offered more than one or two or even three walks.

This programme of walks follows the new format agreed at the last AGM in that short, medium, and long walks are on separate days. This is an attempt to encourage members to take the longer walks. As only one programme has been completed using the new scheme, it is difficult to decide if there has been an improvement in the take up of midweek long walks, I will ask the Membership Secretary to give me some attendance data after the next programme to find out if there has been any significant change.

7.2 Website Officer

There is a new option of Routes under the Walks tab. This shows routes that have been walked by members on the open street map view and could be useful if you need some inspiration.

If you are technically minded, you can send me gpx files of your recorded or planned routes and I will add them to the map. Also you can download the maps as gpx files for your own use.

7.3 Membership Secretary

Here are some membership and walks details for the past Ramblers year:

Nationally Ramblers national membership has reduced by 1876 members to 102818 (-1.8%).

By Area Hampshire has reduced slightly by 71 members to 4112 and just remains the 4th largest in the UK.

By Group – *ALTON* Membership stands at 208, compared with 211 last year, a nominal net reduction of 3. This compares with a net loss of 9 members last year, so a slight improvement. As a matter of interest, this compares with my earliest record of 2006 when we had 340 members. So we have had 29 new members (up on last year), no re-instatements and we have lost 32 through resignation, transfer from area or non-payment (mainly the latter) compared with 23 last year.

So overall, membership appears stable after a long period of decline. In 2006 we had 47 new members and 43 lost.

Walking statistics

Of a potential 133 walks, we have organised 126: 3 short and 6 long mid-week needed walk leaders and then we had 2 short walks cancelled through no walkers or weather and 1 long cancelled through no walkers. So nett 124 actually took place. This compares with 125 walks last year. The total number walking for the year was 1358 compared with 1335 last year so the overall average of 11 people was the same as last year. This compares with 2399 people in 2006 so you can see the drop that has taken place over the years. Long mid-week walks were poorly attended earlier in the year but these have improved in the last programme, after an alternate day was used

to that of the short walk.

So for this last year, virtually all walks numbers remained the same although there were no evening walks organised. Previously, we had 2 walks with a pub finish for which 12 turned up. Is this worth considering further, that is if anyone wishes to lead? We were joined though by 316 visitors through the year, no doubt bolstered by the Walking Festival.

As ever, my thanks go to all walk leaders and also for sending me their walk numbers, so enabling me to give you these statistics. I do ask that all walk leaders now use the walks attendance form, scan this and e-mail it to me. Please let me know if you change your e-mail address. Of course, if you don't have a scanner then just e-mail me or phone me. GDPR continues to present problems to us but we must battle on with it.

Finally, I must announce that the most active members over the past year are:

In 3rd place Alf West 38 walks

In 2nd place Lynn Frances 44 walks

In 1st place Janet Johnston 49 walks

7.4 Footpath Secretary

Working Parties this year have donated 870 volunteer hours with a narrower spread of people. We turned out 45 times. Two were cancelled due to snow and one due to sickness. The team has been most flexible in working to assist with the BVPI survey in Froyle and the Tistedes. Thank you to our 4 Working Party Team Leaders.

We worked jointly with Countryside Access to install a Sleeper bridge in Bentley, 3 Gates for The Three Castles Path in Wield, upgraded the signage of St Swithun's Way in Froyle, cleared Bridleway 62 in Binsted and resurfaced Path 52 in Alton.

Our contact in HCC Abby Sullivan has been promoted to Senior Countryside Access Ranger.

Adam Macy is her replacement. Gareth Siu replaces Emma who has resigned.

The Broad View Farm inspector inquiry was adjourned until 2019 by The Planning Inspector.

HCC has decided not to extinguish Alton path 49 after our objection to it.

Farringdon Footpath 1 is to be slightly re-routed in The Farringdon Business Park. No objection registered.

The Tarmac Quarry is planning to divert Kingsley Footpath 5 with a good quality path. After a site visit I sent a positive response to HCC in July. It will go before The Regulating Committee on 12th of September.

Network Rail is planning to close the Level Crossings at Alice Holt and Buckshorn Oak. A hybrid lift and accessible ramp are proposed to be built.

Thank you to all footpath wardens; please continue to send me reports of problems in your parish.

7.5 Publicity Officer

Ongoing publicity still appears in the Library and the Community Centre although there seems to be ever-increasing competition for space in the Community Centre.

Most weeks I am able to get the programme for the following week in the *Alton Herald* although I only have evidence of two people turning up as a result of the publication.

There was a stall at the Medstead Fete in July where we displayed our walks and discussed the joys of walking with local inhabitants. It seems like a good idea to establish some presence at summer fetes and help on the day is very welcome.

Some signs have been produced in white plastic to inform walkers that gates have been installed in our region by Alton Ramblers. One gate has so far been signed and we could also put them on our other work. This is still a work in progress and fixing signs can be complicated especially where small signs might be more appropriate.

The *Walks from Alton* books may be our best form of advertising and books were sold at the Fete and during the Walking Festival. We are indebted to Patric for his continuing efforts.

7.6 Social Secretary

Since the last AGM there have been three social events, one less than last year.

The New Year Lunch at the Alton House Hotel was attended by 29 members, 4 less than the previous year. The food and service was good as usual and those present enjoyed themselves, especially when completing a Christmas Quiz.

The details and menu for the 2019 New Year Lunch are in the Newsletter which is due out shortly. I hope more of you will make an effort to attend as numbers have dropped in recent years. There will also be a Skittles night next month.

Our Quiz plus Fish & Chips Supper attracted fewer attendees this year (27 as opposed to 31). A team calling themselves The 'Princesses' won (I wonder what Freud would have made of the choice of name). There were the usual challenges to the Quizmaster but it was all made in a friendly if combative manner.

The summer BBQ was a little later this year and the weather was relatively kind to us. There was no walk prior to the event, as no volunteer was forthcoming. Numbers were up on the previous year and everyone enjoyed the various salads and puddings on offer as well as the meat items cooked by Gill & Trevors' son in law. I am very grateful to Gill and Trevor for hosting this event.

Finally I would like to thank those of you who have supported the various events I have organised since I became Social Secretary in 2010. Without you the job would have been meaningless. I wish my successor all the best for the future and ask that you give him or her as much support as you have given me.

8. Election of Officers:

The Chairman suggested that Committee members willing to stand again should be re-elected en bloc.

Roy Kirby proposed and Rosemary Cornick seconded and the following were re-elected unanimously:

Chairman AJ Barlow

Deputy Chairman John Jones

Treasurer Trevor Plumbley

Programme Secretary John Jones

Website Officer John Jones

Membership Secretary Anthony Collins

Footpath Secretary Rob Hannah

8.1 Secretary

Jenny Thompson proposed by Clare Kirby, seconded by Sue Rogers and elected unanimously.

8.2 Walking Environment Officer

Vacant

8.3 Publicity Officer

Vacant

8.4 Social Secretary

Chester volunteered for a year and was proposed by John Jones, seconded by Helen Smith and elected unanimously.

AJ thanked the outgoing officers for all their services over the past years.

9. Walking Festival report and plans for 2019

AJ said the 2018 festival had been very successful and he wanted to repeat it in 2019. We are devoting the entire May programme to the Festival again. The walks offered should be local to Alton. He requested that people look at the sheet of walks available and see if they could offer a walk on any of the days.

10. Training for Walking Safety

We have arranged a meeting for the whole membership on 4 March 2019 at the Maltings. Someone from Head Office will be talking about walking and safety and what it means to be a leader. It has been opened up to Walk Alton and Walking for Health.

11. Any other business

11.1 Presentations

Presentation to Janet for doing the most walks.

AJ said that the Committee was going to give Patric and Sarah Hinds a gift for all their work on the *Walks from Alton*.

Presentation to Roy for his years of service.

11.2 Stuart queried the new walk attendance list. AJ clarified that the list does allow the leader to indicate non-members. If there is a new walker who is not a member the leader can ask them for their email so that we can keep in touch. The list is a simple way to keep a check on the people on a walk and to get communication information. Non-members are not covered by insurance. AJ to check whether non-members are covered for their first 3 walks with us. **Action AJ**

11.3 Stuart also asked whether we can get exemptions for parking at the rugby club. AJ has checked and doesn't think it is possible.

11.4 AJ showed a book called *Rights of Way Restoring the Record* that belongs to Alton Ramblers. It is a resource for anyone who is interested in keeping footpaths open.

AJ gave a vote of thanks for those who provided the tea and coffee.

The meeting closed at 9.45

MINUTES APPROVED

ChairmanDate.....

Secretary.....Date.....

Post –meeting

The situation regarding insurance for non-members on walks was clarified from the Ramblers website:

Are non-members covered on group walks?

Non members are covered and should be encouraged to join the Ramblers after three taster walks.

If they do not join after this time they are not covered by the Ramblers insurance, thus if they cause an accident, such as leaving a gate open and cattle escape, they would be liable to cover any associated costs themselves.