

# MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ALTON RAMBLERS GROUP

HELD VIA ZOOM

Monday 26 October 2020 at 7.30pm

**Present:** AJ Barlow, Chairman  
Trevor Plumbley, Treasurer  
Jenny Thompson, Secretary  
Louise Fletcher, Membership Secretary  
John Jones, Programme Secretary/Website Officer  
Sue Rogers, Footpath Secretary  
Rob Hannah, Walking Environment Officer  
Diane Titterington, Social Secretary  
Chester Whapshare, Publicity Officer  
Plus 13 members of Alton Ramblers

## 1. Apologies for absence

Stuart Tuttlebury and Valerie Woods, Jenny Rigby, Judy Aiken.

## 2. Acceptance of the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2019

John Jones proposed the Minutes be accepted, Jenny Thompson seconded, accepted unanimously.

## 3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

None.

## 4. Chairman's Report

2020 has proved to be a challenging year for all of us, and for Alton Ramblers, but at least we are now back walking, albeit a more limited programme and limited walk numbers. At least, this is successfully getting people booked and walking together again. Our footpath maintenance has also resumed slowly after the spring.

We do face some tasks ahead of us, and as Chairman, sometimes it's not all good news.

Some walk leaders are perfectly understandably not leading at present. The remaining leaders are filling in with the limited programme. But we always need more leaders, new leaders and I hope those members who have ever thought of trying it will come forward and get trained and supported to give it a real go. Walk leading is not a difficult task, but immensely rewarding. I urge anyone thinking of leading to give it a try alongside a current leader colleague. Perhaps your local area has some nice walks, but we never go there- here's your chance to show us some new countryside!

The Alton Walking Festival was cancelled in May. It is not yet clear if the Festival will go ahead in May 2021.

Likewise, our social programme is at present frozen and no new events are planned, including the New Year Lunch. It is not clear when we will restart, but we will let you know when we do.

We now have a local Alton Ramblers mini-leaflet for local publicity with maximum relevance to local would-be walkers. We are searching for new ways to get them out to people, in these times of no events etc.

I especially want to recognise and thank Chester Whapshare, who, after 6 years, initially as Chairman, will step down from his current role on the Committee. Thank you on behalf of all of us for great service to us over several years!

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?

2021 will surely be a better year for us all, may I wish you all well. Stay safe!

Thank you.

Roy Kirby proposed the Chairman's report be accepted, seconded by Louise Fletcher, carried unanimously.

## 5. Treasurer's Report and Adoption of Accounts

This report covers the 12 months to 30 September 2020.

The 'Profit and Loss Account', 'Balance Sheet' and the 'Statement of Assets' are presented as Appendix 1.

### *Main - Income*

There were three main sources of income - an allowance from Central Office, Ramblers Holidays and book sales. The income from the books still provides a substantial contribution in spite of the closure of shops in the early part of 2020 owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### *Main – Expenditure*

Our regular expenses of printing and posting of Walk Programmes/Newsletter have been reduced as we did not publish a summer edition as walks were cancelled again due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Walk Leaders' Meeting was to be held but was also necessarily cancelled. We have not tried to reclaim our room hire costs and hence this event is shown as a loss.

Our volunteer workforce has also been suspended for a major part of the year and hence expenses have been less than we were predicting. However, thanks partly due to the ~60% grant received from HCC, we have purchased an electric hedge trimmer and have also bought some equipment (roof bars etc.) to allow our Footpath Secretary (volunteer group coordinator) to transport the equipment and tools to their working sites.

### *Self-Funded Activities*

Again, many of our self-funded activities (the enjoyable social events) during the year were cancelled owing to the pandemic. However, a skittles night was held late last year and also a New Year Lunch, both events showing a small profit. The Quiz Night was cancelled and again we have not reclaimed our fee for the room hire and thus we are showing a loss for this particular event. Our social activities are targeted to break even over the year and considering all activities we are showing a small profit this year, but we did pay the deposits for our Skittles evening and 2020 New Year Lunch in the last year's accounts. It is to be noted that the accounts are simply a snapshot of our funds at the year end, and that our social events do more or less break even on a year-to-year basis.

It is also noted that the change in the rules advised by Ramblers Central Office last year - in that 'donations' from Ramblers Walking Holidays in respect of holidays booked by group members can now be used for social activities and do not have to be entered into the Main Fund - means that our self-funded activities show a healthy profit.

Having also accumulated money from previous years in our social funds, as reported last year, we do need to adopt a more liberal approach to social funding in the coming years as this pot of money needs to be reduced! The alternative is to donate some of this money to the Main Fund.

### *Restricted Funds*

We have had a grant from the HCC for 60% of the purchase price of an electric hedge trimmer.

### *Other*

- a) In order to reduce 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, money has been set aside for spending next year for our volunteer workforce expenses (£500), the purchase of tools for the volunteer workforce (£200) and the purchase and installation of a bench (£350) – location yet to be decided.
- 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 Steve Ditcham on 19 Oct 2020.
- d) A separate 'Asset Register' is kept of items owned by the Alton Group and is available to members.

### *Discussion*

Roy Kirby asked if we had heard any more from Ramblers about too much funding. We still need to get our reserves ratio correct. Trevor has put money aside for various activities as above which will sort it out. AJ commented that HQ membership return does not cover our running expenses, so we need to sell books etc, and to keep funds for several years.

Diane Titterington suggested an end-of-Covid party.

The accounts have been approved by Steve Ditcham.

Anthony Collins proposed the Treasurer's report be accepted, Roy Kirby seconded, carried unanimously.

## 6. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2020-21

Steve Ditcham was proposed and accepted unanimously.

## 7. 2018 AGM Reports by:

### 7.1 Programme Secretary

Covid put a sharp brake on our activities, but, since the start of August, we have managed successfully to resume walking. There have been 19 walks since August. We have 10 in November and a further 8 in the rest of the next programme.

Sunday walks have been well attended, but midweek walks were initially well attended, but numbers have fallen off recently.

The November to March template is on the website and 18 walks have been entered. Although the format is as normal, I have not specified lengths of walks and I am relaxed about dates and numbers of walks on any day. The reason is that we have so few active leaders that we must be accommodating for them so as to encourage as many walks as possible.

In March, we had 35 leaders, most of whom were active, now we have only 18 who will lead and currently only 14 have put forward walks. There are 12 who are ill or isolating and 5 who no longer wish to lead.

We are fortunate that the usual stalwarts are leading beyond the call of duty and the new leaders, Jim Bartholomew and Diana Samuel, are pitching in.

All our walks in Ramblers Walks Manager are headed with the message:

**COVID-19:** Due to COVID-19 we all need to take extra steps to stay safe. Please follow all safety advice given by the walk leader, including the latest guidelines on physical distancing. For more information about COVID-19 and Ramblers group walks, please see our guidance for walkers on the coronavirus pages of the Ramblers website. **Booking:** The number of people per walk is limited for social distancing and contact details are needed for possible tracing, so please book walks from one week before and up to two days before the walk, by e-mail to [programme@altonramblers.org.uk](mailto:programme@altonramblers.org.uk). If you do not book, you will be turned away. If, after booking, you cannot walk please let me know so I can contact another. If there is overbooking, preference will be given to Alton Group members.

I am running the booking system with Lynn's help. The date and time I receive bookings are recorded, as are the issue and receipt of Risk Assessments. I also record how many bookings each walker makes in case I need to request frequent bookers to give way to more occasional walkers to even out to the opportunities. Although we are permitted up to 30 on a walk, my current advice is around 12, but Leaders can choose the number they are comfortable with. The number of places available on a walk is shown on the template and I try my best to keep the data up to date.

Acceptance proposed by Diane Titterington, seconded by Jim Bartholomew.

### 7.2 Website Officer

The current walks template is still shown so October walks booking places can be seen. The next template is also there for planning November to March.

The Routes Library display has changed a little. The website will ask you for permission to know your location, you do not have to give this, so you can find walks near to you. Also, on the map display is a location icon, top left, for the same purpose. On the upper right is a location search, so you can find routes near to any other location on the map.

These tools are also on the Routes Creating facility.

Acceptance proposed Diane Titterington, seconded by Jim Bartholomew.

### 7.3 Membership Secretary

This has been an interesting year!

I am pleased to report that our membership numbers have increased despite Hampshire and National membership numbers going down. I think our healthy figures are thanks to a very loyal membership and an excellent programme of walks we have managed to continue with despite Covid 19. Thank you John, Lynn (and AJ in July) for all the extra work you have put in to this.

Ramblers have now moved their membership lists completely to a real-time online membership database. There have been a few glitches but I and Ramblers are coming to terms

with it slowly. This new system will rely on our members keeping their details up-to-date with Ramblers. Hopefully in future years the figures will add up correctly.

#### *Membership Figures*

|                     | ALTON        |              | HAMPSHIRE    |              | NATIONAL     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                     | 30 Sept 2019 | 30 Sept 2020 | 30 Sept 2019 | 30 Sept 2020 | 30 Sept 2019 | 30 Sept 2020 |
| Membership          | 200          | 211          | 4,038        | 3,937        | 102,038      | 98,717       |
| New Members         | 18           | 19           |              |              |              |              |
| Leavers             | 29           | 6            |              |              |              |              |
| Membership Change   | -8           | +11 (*1)     |              |              |              |              |
| Membership Change % |              | 5.5%         |              | 2.5%         |              | -3.3%        |

#### *Walk Statistics 30 Sept 2019 – 30 Sept 2020*

Our walk programme has been significantly reduced this year because of Covid 19. However, despite this, 80 local members have attended at least one of our walks and we have welcomed 72 visitor walkers. Thank you walk leaders for sending me the list of your walkers.

|                           | Mid-Week Short | Mid-Week Medium | Mid-Week Long | Evening | Sunday    | Total      |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------|-----------|------------|
| Walks offered             | 10             | 10              | 9             | 0       | 37        | 66         |
| Walks Cancelled (*2) (*3) | 2              | 2               | 2             |         | 2         | 8          |
| Walkers                   | 127            | 87              | 51            | 0       | 379       | 644        |
| Average (*4)              | 12.7 (13)      | 8.7 (6)         | 5.7           | 0       | 10.2 (10) | 9.8 (10.6) |

Our most active local members 2019/20 are:

1. Lynn Frances 30 walks
2. John Jones 28 walks
3. Maxine Dalton 18 walks
4. Bob Dalton 17 walks
5. Louise Fletcher 17 walks
6. Alf West 16 walks

Acceptance proposed by Anthony Collins, seconded by Chester Whapshare.

#### **7.4 Walking Environment Officer**

The main job is to watch planning applications that have been submitted. HCC are now providing informal consultation with people wanting to make changes to footpaths.

Acceptance proposed by Graeme Parkin, seconded by Roy Kirby.

#### **7.5 Footpath Secretary**

This year has been a very difficult period as far as maintaining footpaths is concerned. During the lockdown I have been using my bike to go around the different parishes and updating the HCC map.

During the lockdown we did a survey on railway crossings for Ramblers Area and a survey for the Esso pipeline crossing footpaths before they start the work. We also did our biannual survey doing the parish of Worldham over June, July and August.

We have a great group of volunteers in Alton who are always willing to undertake all manner of footpath maintenance and I thank them for their continuing work. We have been busy during

the last month catching up on issues that were planned on footpaths earlier in the year. We built some steps in Beech and made a walkway over a stream in Selborne, put in way marker posts in Worldham and replaced fallen fingerposts. We also did some vegetation cutting in Beech and Worldham, putting in posts and clearing some steps in Alton.

In November we are doing more work with HCC putting in kissing gates, handrails etc. and repairing paths, as well as a survey.

We have done over 600 hours this year of which two hundred hours were surveying. The next survey is Four Marks.

Thanks to Chester and Rob we are putting in an application for S106 grant from East Hampshire District Council for the bridleway in Medstead on behalf of Medstead Parish Council. This path has long been a problem.

The warden meeting in March went well and I hope it was useful for those who attended. We now have wardens for all but Selborne and Newton Valence. We have three replacement new wardens joining us for Kingsley, Chawton and Medstead in addition to the two new ones in Beech and Bentworth who joined us this time last year.

I would like to thank all the wardens for the work they have done this year albeit with some difficulty. I am hoping that once the rules are relaxed we can have more coordination of the footpath work with the parish council footpath secretaries, the wardens and our volunteering work.

If anyone is interested in becoming a Warden or joining our busy group of volunteers please let me know.

Acceptance proposed by Roy Kirby, seconded by Jenny Thompson.

#### **7.6 Publicity Officer**

Publicity is important to Ramblers as we are always looking for new members. The best kind is word of mouth and there are a lot of people like me who will think about it for many years until the time is right to give it a try. Now that I am leaving the committee we will need someone to take on the job which is not onerous and may not show results very soon.

We have always placed our ads in the community centre and library and there is usually a copy of the programme in the library. The *Alton Herald* and *Round and About* have been kind enough to copy our programme into their pages for no charge and, now that we have leaflets to distribute, there are endless possible venues around the town.

During the summer months, we usually visit a couple of village fetes in a gazebo with maps and compasses on display and sometimes we manage to sell a few of Patric's books. If you feel that you are able to help out, come and talk to a committee member and join the team.

Discussion

Sue asked if there were any more plaques. We need to order some more from Tanya.

Acceptance proposed by Jenny Thompson, seconded by Sue Rogers.

#### **7.7 Social Secretary**

Nothing to report because everything was cancelled and nothing is planned. Hopefully we might be able to pick up with the quiz in April or a marquee in Anstey Park in the summer for a barbecue.

Acceptance proposed by Louise Fletcher, seconded by Maxine Dalton.

### **8. Election of Officers:**

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

Roy Kirby proposed and Bob Dalton seconded and the following were re-elected unanimously:

|                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Chairman                    | AJ Barlow          |
| Deputy Chairman             | John Jones         |
| Secretary                   | Jenny Thompson     |
| Treasurer                   | Trevor Plumbley    |
| Programme Secretary         | John Jones         |
| Website Officer             | John Jones         |
| Membership Secretary        | Louise Fletcher    |
| Walking Environment Officer | Rob Hannnah        |
| Footpath Secretary          | Sue Rogers         |
| Social Secretary            | Diane Titterington |

### **8.1 Publicity Officer**

Nobody has shown any interest in filling the post, so it will remain vacant at present.

AJ thanked Chester for all his services over the past years.

### **9. Footpath Wardens**

We are short of 3 footpath wardens, so if you are interested please talk to Sue Rogers.

### **10. Walk leaders**

We need more leaders. AJ said it is a very satisfying job. If anyone has an idea to lead it would be most welcome.

### **11. Alton Christmas markets**

Graham Titterington said that there are going to be 2 or 3 Saturday markets in Alton in the run-up to Christmas. He suggested we might go along. AJ said it was a good opportunity to mingle and hand out leaflets. So please contact Diane Titterington if you are interested.

### **12. Any other business**

Bob Dalton gave thanks on behalf of himself and all Alton Ramblers to the Committee for their work and for volunteering to do it for another year. John Jones thanked those members who joined this evening.

The near future depends on decisions made at Ramblers HQ and how things develop nationally in relation to Covid-19.

*The meeting closed at 8.30*

### **MINUTES APPROVED**

Chairman ..... A J Barlow ..... Date..... 1-11-21 .....

Secretary..... J.R.Thompson..... Date..... 07.10.21 .....

## Appendix I

### ALTON RAMBLERS PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT 1 Oct 2018 to 30 SEP 2019

|                                | MAIN<br>£      | RESTRICTED<br>£ | SELF-FUNDED<br>£ | TOTAL          | Prior year |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|------------|
| <b>INCOME</b>                  |                |                 |                  |                |            |
| Funding from Ramblers CO       | 295.97         |                 |                  |                | 298.84     |
| Donations (Ramblers' Holidays) |                |                 | 240.00           |                | 130.00     |
| Other Donations                | 0.00           |                 |                  |                | 100.00     |
| Deposit Interest               | 0.00           |                 |                  |                | 0.00       |
| Publications / Books sales     | 315.00         |                 |                  |                | 1929.00    |
| HCC Grant for practical work   | 0.00           |                 |                  |                | 0.00       |
| Other                          |                |                 |                  |                | 0.00       |
| Socials                        |                |                 | 1434.30          |                | 1336.05    |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>610.97</b>  |                 | <b>1674.30</b>   | <b>2285.27</b> |            |
| <b>EXPENDITURE</b>             |                |                 |                  |                |            |
| Walks Programmes/Newsletter    | 163.08         |                 |                  |                | 146.24     |
| Walks related                  | 0.00           |                 |                  |                | 63.03      |
| Walk Leader training           | 90.55          |                 |                  |                | 69.15      |
| Publicity                      | 10.00          |                 |                  |                | 72.00      |
| Meetings incl. AGM             | 8.60           |                 |                  |                | 58.65      |
| Practical work                 | 279.88         |                 |                  |                | 9.24       |
| Publications/goods costs       | 100.00         |                 |                  |                | 1062.00    |
| Admin.                         | 30.17          |                 |                  |                | 77.80      |
| Campaign/Casework              | 99.00          |                 |                  |                |            |
| Other                          | 20.00          |                 |                  |                |            |
| Socials                        |                |                 | 1627.66          |                | 1242.70    |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>801.28</b>  | <b>0.00</b>     | <b>1627.66</b>   | <b>2428.94</b> |            |
| <b>NET INCOME/(LOSS)</b>       | <b>-190.31</b> | <b>0.00</b>     | <b>46.64</b>     | <b>-143.67</b> |            |

#### Notes:

1. The above accounts are completed on a "receipts and payment" basis (as dictated by The Ramblers Ass.) and not on an "accruals" basis, i.e. the accounts are a snapshot at the close of business on 30 Sep 2019 only.
2. The Profit and Loss Account above is under 3 headings which are summed as we only hold a single bank account. "Main" refers to income and expenditure with respect to the charitable aims of The Ramblers (our normal business), "Restricted" refers to funds donated to our group for a specific purpose and spent accordingly (none this year), and "Self-Funded" refers to income and expenditure for our social activities which should at least break even over the year.
3. Also included in "self-funded" activities is our annual subscription of £25 to ATTA.

## Appendix I

### BALANCE SHEET 30 Sep 2019

| Date                                                                                     | 01-Oct-18      | 30-Sep-19      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Bank balance                                                                             | 3682.91        | 3566.24        |
| Cash                                                                                     | 29.28          | 2.28           |
| Net profit/loss for year ending 30th September 2019 (from Profit and Loss Account above) | -143.67        |                |
|                                                                                          | <u>3568.52</u> | <u>3568.52</u> |

### STATEMENT OF ASSETS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

|             |            |               | Prior year     |
|-------------|------------|---------------|----------------|
| Main Fund   |            | 2901.56       | 3091.87        |
| Social Fund |            | 666.96        | 620.32         |
| Stock *     | 752 x 1.01 | <u>759.52</u> | <u>1069.78</u> |
| Total       |            | 4328.04       | 4781.97        |

#### \* Notes

1) "Stock" refers to The Ramblers' "Walks from Alton" books. These are valued for stock at their cost price, not their selling price. The number is the number of books held by Alton Ramblers.

2) Stock does not include tools for practical work as these are not to be re-sold. Separate Asset List applies.