

**Ramblers' Association**  
**Bristol Ramblers - Annual General Meeting**

**December 7th 2010**

**United Reform Church, Redland Park, Bristol 7.30 p.m.**

**Committee members present:** Peter Gould, Pauline Platts, Stephen Draper, Carew Reynell, Angela Stansbie, Eileen Bartlett, Tony Parsons, Neil Burlton

A list of Bristol RA members present is filed with the minutes.

See attachment 1

**1. Chairman's Introduction**

Peter welcomed members to the AGM. He thanked all those members who had helped with organising and leading walks and also those involved with the running of the group in a variety of roles. He also thanked those organising the catering for the meeting.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Geoff Daniels, Margaret Ruse, Bela Kantor, Geoff Harris and Susan Carter, Maureen Johnson, Mary Magro and Mary Cross.

**3. Minutes of the 2009 AGM**

The minutes of the previous AGM were accepted by the meeting.

**4. Matters arising**

Peter mentioned that Avon Area are now coordinating with the Community Forest Walk team. He also said that problems with the Ramblers membership database have largely been sorted out.

**5. Annual Report**

A copy of the Annual Report is filed with the minutes.

See attachment 2.

Carew gave a summary of progress over the last year. In particular he thanked Clive Richardson for his contribution as Sunday B walks coordinator over the previous 7.5 years and Gwyneth Littlejohn for taking on the role.

With regard to footpath issues Peter said that Bristol City Council had recently done very good work on dedication of riverside paths in Bristol including the Monarch's Way by the Netham.

Carew thanked Peter for the good work he was doing (as Area Footpath Officer). He said that, with cutbacks in council spending there could be more enthusiasm from local councils in working with volunteers from Bristol Ramblers on footpath maintenance.

He said that it had been a busy year for Susan Carter liaising with the Council and putting forward the Ramblers' issues. Feedback indicates that the council takes some notice of our comments. It may be necessary in future for our group to provide some funds for maintenance of footpaths in the city.

The Ramblers HQ had put forward plans for an Assurance of Quality of Walk Leaders. However Peter said that following feedback from our group and other groups they had decided to abandon this scheme. Carew thanked John Maher and Tony Kerr for their work in setting up the new group website.

The Annual Report was accepted by the meeting.

Proposed by **Carew Reynell**, seconded by **John Wrigley**

## **6. Financial Accounts**

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010 were circulated at the meeting and a copy is filed with the minutes.

See attachment 3.

Pauline Platts said that the accounts were in a different format to last year, in line with HQ requirement.

Earlier in the year it had been expected that we would receive reduced funds for 2010/2011. For this reason we had made several savings including reducing costs of postage and of meeting rooms. However we will actually receive all we requested for 2010/2011 (£3600).

### Admin Fund

Total receipts for 2009/10 were £2558 and outlay was £2284 giving a small surplus. However this surplus only arose because of donations from Taunton Leisure and from a member of the group.

Currently £2540 in the account + £655 worth of postage stamps (probably sufficient to last us for the year 2010/11).

### Project Fund

The only spending from this fund was a contribution to the cost of the first aid course. This used money donated by Alan Burton.

The Accounts were approved by the meeting.  
Proposed by **Pauline Platts**, seconded by **Anna Kulisa**

## **7. Future Arrangements for Communication**

A document detailing the options for future communication with group members was circulated. (Attachment 4).

Following the financial problems at Ramblers HQ the committee had considered how money could be saved with regard to printing and postage costs for the programme and the Boot. Firstly there was the hope that more members will switch to electronic distribution of the programme etc. However only about 15% of the members had opted for this.

For new members it is the intention (when the membership database is fully functional) that they would receive electronic distribution by default and would have to opt in to postal distribution.

The current proposal is that the printed Boot would be replaced with an electronic newsletter published once a month. This would only be distributed to those people who had opted to receive the programme electronically. There would however be a summary of the main news items in the programme (although this will only be issued every four months). There will also be the news items on the website. Those opting for postal distribution would still receive details of group holidays at the same time as those selecting electronic distribution. Electronic news would include details of changes to walks, retail offers and relevant meetings (e.g. Stanfords Wilderness Lectures)

The proposal was discussed at the meeting and it was generally agreed that this was a good idea. It not only meant that members could be given more frequent news updates but also it might encourage more people to opt for electronic distribution. This may also encourage new members as electronic distribution is the modern expectation.

It was agreed that the Group would cease to produce The Boot in paper form, and that it should be replaced by a more frequent electronic newsletter.

Chris Sanders pointed out that when the programme was received by email it could be dragged onto the desktop, providing a rapid means of access.

It was requested whether there could be a quick method on the website to select electronic distribution. John Maher said this would be possible. It was concluded that electronic newsletters should be sent out. However they may not necessarily be every month.

## **8. The Walks Programme**

Gwynneth had told Peter that she had plenty of offers for leaders of evening walks.

In the past Nick Wilkes had led some shorter Sunday walks. However there had not generally been many people on the walks. There was a discussion as to whether there should be such walks in the future, and if so when (eg am or pm), and where (in the city or in the country).

It was agreed that some walks would be included in the Summer. Nigel de Bray, Neil Burlton and Peter Gould volunteered to lead the walks. Tony suggested that Nick Wilkes would probably be willing to lead a few.

## **9. Certificates of Achievement**

Peter presented three certificates to

- i) Neil Burlton for his contributions to the group over the years. Neil said he was retiring as a committee member after a period of ten years. He said he was thankful for the opportunities to be involved with various projects. He requested that next year some money be used to print more guides to the Bristol Triangle Walk. Stocks of these were now getting low.
- ii) John Maher for his work on the Website
- iii) Clive Richardson for his work in coordinating Sunday B walks.

## **10. Election of Officers (No post was contested)**

Chairman

**Peter Gould** (Proposed by **Pauline Platts**, seconded by **Patsy Hudson**)

Vice Chairman

**Carew Reynell** (Proposed by **Patsy Hudson**, seconded by **Stephen Draper**)

Secretary

**Carew Reynell** (Proposed by **Stephen Draper**, seconded by **Chris Holloway**)

Treasurer

**Pauline Platts** (Proposed by **Carew Reynell**, seconded by **Eileen Bartlett**)

Minutes Secretary

**Tony Parsons** (Proposed by **Anna Kulisa**, seconded by **David Pingstone**)

Membership Secretary

**Angela Stansbie** (Proposed by **Peter Hobbs**, seconded by **Chris Sanders**)

Programme Coordinator

**Tony Parsons** (Proposed by **Chris Holloway**, seconded by **Nigel Andrews**)

Footpath Officer

Vacant. No volunteers

Environmental Officer

**Susan Carter** (Proposed by **Peter Hobbs**, seconded by **John Maher**)

Communications Officer

Vacant. No volunteers

Publicity Officer

Vacant

Other Committee members

Neil Burlton had said he would not be continuing on the committee.

Stephen Draper and Eileen Bartlett said they were happy to continue.

They were proposed by **Anna Kulisa**, seconded by **Pauline Platts** and duly elected

## **11. Appointment of Independent Examiner**

**Keith Jones** was appointed as examiner for 2010/2011: (Proposed by **Julia Westgarth**, seconded by **Chris Holloway**)

## **12. Other appointments**

Many tasks are undertaken by non committee members: John Maher has taken over as the Webmaster. The Saturday Morning Walks Organiser,

the Wednesday Walks Organiser and the Hill/A Walks Organiser were all willing to continue.

Gwyneth Littlejohn has taken over as Sunday B Walks organiser. Whilst she will continue as evenings walks organiser she would prefer someone else to take on this role.

Julia Westgarth is happy to continue as newsletter editor.

### **13. Donation to Longtown Mountain Rescue Team**

It was agreed to make a donation of £75 to the Longtown Mountain Rescue team.

Chris Holloway said that in the past there had been an offer that some members attend one of the Mountain Rescue Team training sessions, acting as victims. However this had had to be cancelled. When Pauline sends the donation she will ask if this is still possible.

### **14. Any Other Business**

Carew asked that walk leaders take some membership forms with them to hand out to new members on their walk.

Peter Hobbs and Carew pointed out that there would be an article about the Bristol Ramblers Festival of Winter Walks in a December issue of the Venue.

Dan Evans had said that there were still places available for the Christmas lunch.

### **15. Closure of the Meeting**

Tony Kerr asked for a vote of thanks for the Committee which was given.

**END OF MINUTES**

Last updated 13/12/10

## **Attachment 2: Bristol Ramblers Annual Report 2009/10**

### **Walks programme**

During the year, the Group's programme included 280 walks (262 last year). This included Avon Area walks, Wessex Wanderer walks, and joint walks with other groups. In addition, there were trips to Welsh Bicknor, the Yorkshire Dales, Coniston, Stow on the Wold, St Ives, and even Camina Santiago. Thanks are due to Walk Coordinators, walk leaders and the organisers of trips for maintaining this outstanding programme. In particular, Clive Richardson's contribution should be noted. Clive is standing down after seven years as B/C Walks Coordinator, and the programme has thrived during his watch. Having cut her teeth on the evening walks, Gwyneth Littlejohn has kindly offered to step into Clive's king-sized boots. This year also saw the successful visit by CAI Lucca, ably managed by Martin Summerell. The Group participated in the Ramblers national Get Walking Day and Festival of Winter Walks, gaining useful publicity and some new members. Neil Burlton has done sterling work updating 11 of the Bristol Backs walks. These have been published in two attractive booklets, and the walks were included in the programme over the summer. Nick Wilkes gallantly persevered with shorter Sunday walks within the city, but take up has been disappointing. Developing some half-day Sunday walks outside the city is a planned priority for 2010/11.

Tony Parsons arranged a very successful first aid training session, at which 11 members were trained. This was partially funded by money generously donated by Alan Burton.

### **Footpaths issues**

There is a full report from the Avon Footpath Sub-committee in the Area Annual Report. In summary:

- The most important and time consuming issue has been "alleygating". To date, Bristol City Council's (BCC) procedure is still with the RA's solicitor;
- BCC is developing a new Walking Strategy;
- There has been a useful meeting with two sections of BCC that develop the City's estate asking them to make connections with the Public Rights of Way Network;
- Progress on Dundry has stalled because the landowner died;
- On the riverside paths at Shirehampton and Netham there has been undramatic progress towards dedication;
- We have kept pressure on BCC about the state of the towpath downstream of the Chequers, and furnished information on the arcane subject of "willow spiling";
- A complaint about a path at Ashton Vale should lead to general improvement to the network; • Across Ashton Vale, we consider the BCC scheme to ameliorate the impact of the proposed Bristol City Stadium to be the best that might be achieved;
- The Ramblers' representative on a regional Highways Agency Committee is asking questions about the time it will take to replace a Motorway overbridge at Lawrence Weston;
- An over-engineered cycleway near the Frome at Blackberry Hill has been opposed;
- Advice was offered to local residents' groups wishing to claim rights of way;
- BCC was alerted to two outbreaks of Japanese Knotweed.

Now for the dog that did not bark: despite Bristol Group's venture into practical works last year, no-one came forward at the AGM to act as Group Footpath Officer to organise working parties in and around Bristol. As bona fide users, Bristol Group members do more footpath clearance with secateurs and sticks than we give ourselves credit for; nevertheless, more might be achieved. "Why", you may ask, "doesn't your Footpath Secretary set this up?" The answer is that Area Footpath Secretaries revel in the legal and bureaucratic briar patch. Group Footpath Officers persuade people to wield sharp tools and shed real blood.

### **Planning and Environmental issues**

Susan Carter has continued to pursue environment and planning issues, acting on behalf of the Bristol Group and/or the Avon Area as appropriate. She has joined a number of consultative groups: the City Council's Neighbourhood Planning Network; the local transport forum for the old Avon area; and Bristol Civic Society's new Public Spaces Group. The Ramblers' involvement is appreciated. Comments have been made on the following issues:

- Zoo parking on the Downs. Objected to proposals by the Zoo to continue parking 660 cars on the Downs for 60 days a year for a further 5 years. Permission given in February for 3 years.
- Bristol Local Development Framework (BLDF): draft core strategy. A key planning document. Expressed concerns in January about proposed extent and density of housing, while welcoming pro-walking policies. Regional housing targets subsequently abandoned. Public inquiry held. Outcome not yet known.
- BLDF site allocation proposals and ideas for development management. Expressed concerns in October about number of open spaces proposed for development while again supporting prowalking and environmental policies.
- Bristol Green Spaces Plans. Suggested 2008 strategy of selling 'low value' green space to fund improvements elsewhere required review. Some of the green space identified in the 14 plans as 'low value' was clearly highly prized. The Council is due to take decisions on sales in late December, while consultation on individual green spaces will continue.
- West of England Rapid Transit: Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre. Could not support proposals wholeheartedly in the absence of traffic management measures, and made detailed comments on the route. Scheme now put 'on hold' because of funding uncertainties.
- West of England Draft Joint Local Transport Plan. Welcomed recognition of the value of walking. Criticised lack of targets, costed proposals and data, and the lack of priority for walking.

### **Campaigning**

In addition to local planning issues, the Group has contributed to national Ramblers consultation on led walks and to local budget consultation.

### **Membership and publicity**

Membership was 908 at the end of the year (estimated 965 last year). The decline may be overstated because of a change in the basis of the count, but any decline is disappointing, although perhaps not surprising in these difficult times. Activity to promote the Group has included:

- Attendance at Redland May Fair, the Festival of Nature, Walk4Life and a University Hospitals' Environmental Event;

- Participation in national events, including the offer of deeplydiscounted membership on Get Walking Day (18 new members);
- Publication of the Walking Bristol booklets;
- Redevelopment of the website, which is now averaging 1,000 visits a month;
- Publicity material at Cotswold Outdoor, Taunton Leisure and Nomad;
- Publicity material in local libraries;
- Inclusion on the Active Bristol website. Thanks are due to all who contributed to this. In particular, John Maher undertook the redevelopment of the website, with Tony Kerr managing the photographs. The new site has had very positive feedback, and the number of views on the Flickr photogallery recently exceeded 10,000. This will provide a platform for improvements to communication and publicity.

A number of opportunities, however, were missed – for example, Bike and Walk to Work Day. Planned priorities for 2010/11 are: further development of electronic communication; further promotional work with local retailers; and enhanced capacity to participate in national and local events.

### **Finance**

The annual accounts are elsewhere on the agenda. All in all, the financial position is better than had been feared.

### **Conclusion**

The Group's core activities are in good health, although the apparent decline in membership is a cause of concern. There are a number of areas where there is room for further development, and additional capacity in the form of Vice Chair, Footpaths Officer, Communications Officer and Sunday Half-Day Walks Coordinator would be very helpful.

## **Attachment 4: Internal communication for the Group**

Concern about future finances led the Committee to review many aspects of how we do things, including internal communication. The financial position is now assessed as being substantially better than had been feared, but, having started to think about possible alternative arrangements, the Committee feels that there are changes that would be beneficial. In particular, more frequent communication could strengthen the Group and circulate information while it is still current. Doing this in paper form would be prohibitively expensive, so the Committee proposes:

- a monthly electronic newsletter;
- inclusion of headline news items in the Walks Programme (four monthly);
- ceasing to produce The Boot.

The electronic newsletter would include walks information, footpath issues, planning and environment news, special events (and, sometimes, requests for help!) and retail offers. Notification of Group trips would continue to appear first in the Walks Programme.

At present, the majority of members receive paper copies of the Walks Programme and The Boot, and would have to opt in to electronic distribution to receive the electronic newsletter. New members will generally receive electronic distribution, but will have the opportunity to opt for paper.

It would be possible for us to continue as we are, but the Committee believes that this is falling increasingly short of what we could be doing. The proposal set out above is therefore submitted to the AGM for consideration.