

Minutes of the AGM held on 27th January, 2018 at the Herringthorpe United Reform Church, Rotherham, S60 4JN (*To be approved at 2019 AGM*)

Welcome

Rosemary Boyle, Chair of the Rotherham Metro Group, welcomed everyone to the AGM and said the last time Rotherham Metro hosted the Area AGM was in 2009. She said that the Rotherham and Dearne Valley Groups had held a successful walking festival in 2017 to which 517 people had participated in five walks over the 5-day festival. In 2018 the Group will be re-launching the Rotherham Ring Route, which is being revived with new signage and some minor route changes. Rosemary said that Rotherham Metro has a good relationship with Rotherham MBC, who give whole-hearted support. She said that the Group are very happy to support Area Council, which provides a good link to Central Office.

Rosemary finished by thanking Ivor and Anne Church for leading the morning walk and said that the Herringthorpe URC had made the Group very welcome.

Obituaries

Condolences were expressed for the deaths in 2017 of local long-time Ramblers members Frank Fairies, Andy Thomas, Margaret Andrews and Betty McNally.

Present

Roly Smith (President), Mike Pye (Vice President), Philip Kerry (Ramblers Trustee), Susie Corfield (Ramblers Volunteering Manager), John Horscroft (Ride Sheffield) and, from Area Council, Allen Pestell (Chair), David Gadd (Secretary), Les Seaman (Access Officer), Christine Whittaker (Information Officer), Terry Howard (Member Without Portfolio), Nicki Speakman (Barnsley and Penistone), Philip Lee (Dearne Valley), Christine Hewitt (Sheffield Visually Impaired Group) and Cynthia Ashton (Sheffield Co-operative Ramblers). There were an additional 37 members present.

Apologies

Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Cath MacKay (MWPF) and from the Sheffield Group: Malcolm MacKay, Judy Gathercole and Neil Schofield; from the Sheffield 40s Group: Jim Conibear and Jeremy Kenyon; from Rotherham Metro: Graham and Linda Barker, John Wadsworth, John Huddleston, Christine Smith, Richard Watson and Philip Ryder and from the Dearne Valley Group: Sue and Gordon Haywood and Nigel Hebden.

Notification of AOB

Les Seaman asked for the time to raise an issue connected with the document 'How public access can be improved post Brexit'. The chair agreed.

Appointment of Tellers

Mike Pyse and Christine Whittaker

President's Address: Roly Smith

"For me, the highlight of the past year was the publication by the Area in April of *Clarion Call: Sheffield's Access Pioneers*. Celebrating GHB Ward and Sheffield's pivotal place in the fight for access to the Peak District moors and surrounding countryside, the book has been an outstanding success.

It was reprinted in December, and Gavin tells me that the book has already gained for the branch gross sales of nearly £5,000. If you haven't got a copy, I urge you to buy one now! The cover price is £7.99 but members can obtain copies for £5.

The book was written by dedicated local access campaigners Dave Sissons, Terry Howard and myself. Dave linked many of Bert Diver's photographs with actual walks as recorded in the famous and avidly-collected Clarion Club Handbooks, which Ward almost single-handedly edited for 50 years.

The book also includes many previously-unseen photographs of the early days of the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers, one of the first working class rambling clubs in the country, and their charismatic leader, GHB 'Bert' Ward. The most popular by far was one of Ward skinny-dipping at Swain's Greave on Bleaklow. As I've said before, those early Clarions were made of stern stuff!

But the book also records the leading role which the city of Sheffield has played over the years in the fight for access to mountain and moorland. Several leading national figures had strong connections with Sheffield, and with the fight for the right to roam, including John Ruskin, Edward Carpenter, John Derry and the Rotherham-born 'Corn Law Rhymer', Ebenezer Elliot. This is especially relevant now that Sheffield is campaigning to become Britain's Outdoor City.

The book attracted a good deal of media publicity, including TV appearances by Terry Howard and myself with Ellie Harrison on BBC 1's *Countryfile* in October. I did an interview on BBC Radio Sheffield with Rony Robinson (who wrote the foreword), and other publicity included a piece by Carey Davies in the *Guardian's* Country Diary, and major features in the *Yorkshire Post Magazine* and the *Sheffield Star* and *Telegraph*. Other reviews appeared in *Walk, the Great Outdoors, Open Space* and the *Peak Advertiser*.

The book also prompted a section on Ward and the Clarions in a new exhibition titled 'Changing Lives: 200 Years of People and Protest in Sheffield', at Weston Park Museum. The exhibition opens on February 6 and runs until July. It features many of Ward's artefacts, including his glasses, suit, trilby hat and size 11 hob-nailed boots! The museum will also keep an archive of Ward's papers and correspondence which will be available for researchers in the future.

There's also the possibility of a new CD of rambling songs, including some from the Clarions and Ward, by Mike Rimmington of Millhouses and friends. Mike has already produced a CD of songs inspired by the Lakeland fellwanderer Alfred Wainwright. It would be wonderful if the Ramblers could help to finance this, as we did with *Clarion Call*.

The 2017 Spirit of Kinder event was held at Edale on April 22, and was also hailed as a great success. It included a line-up of high-profile speakers, including Vanessa Griffiths, Chief Executive of The Ramblers; the newly-elected president of The Ramblers, author and broadcaster Stuart Maconie; Dame Helen Ghosh, Director General of the National Trust, and Stephen Trotter, former manager of the Trust's High Peak estate and now Director of the English Wildlife Trusts.

The Spirit of Kinder event this year will be organised by Manchester RA and will be held at the Friends' Meeting House in Manchester on Saturday, April 21. Speakers will include Kate Ashbrook of the Open Spaces Society and Jim Perrin, the outspoken environmental writer. It's good to see Manchester at last taking an interest in this event, and I hope all who can will support it.

Van Griffiths was again the guest of the Area in October, when she joined some of us on a walk from Longshaw to Carl Wark, Higger Tor, and later for an exciting rope swing over Burbage Brook. Van told me later that she had found it "Nourishing, stimulating and... joyful." I think we were all impressed, and it was really good to meet a Ramblers' Chief Executive who actually enjoyed getting her boots dirty...

Next year (2019) will mark the 70th anniversary of the passing of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which set up our National Parks and Trails, so the 2019 Spirit of Kinder event will have a special resonance. So we'll soon need to start thinking about that.

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new president-elect, former Home Secretary and MP for Brightside and Hillsborough for 28 years, Lord David Blunkett. Unfortunately, David cannot be with us today as he has a previous engagement with the Sheffield Association for the Voluntary Teaching of English, an organisation for which he has been patron for many years.

At the age of 22, David became the youngest-ever councillor on Sheffield City Council and later its youngest leader. He also went out with the "Left Foot Forward" walking group, with Mike Pye and others.

David has always said how he enjoys the glories of our countryside, which he is anxious to continue once he has found a new guide dog to replace his beloved Cosby, who unfortunately passed away last year, so I'm sure you'll be in good hands.

Finally, I'd like to thank you once again for honouring me with the presidency for the second time, and I'd like to wish you all the best for the future".

Approval of the minutes of the 2017 AGM

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting. With the one correction - the title of the Peak District Green Lanes Alliance - they were approved as being correct. Proposed by Les Seaman and seconded Mike Pye. All agreed.

Matters arising from those minutes

Terry Howard reported that replacement of the plastic matting (reference the motion) was ongoing.

Annual Report

Due to an administrative error the printed version of the Annual Report omitted the Chair/Secretary's Report. This was available as a separate document. The digital version of the Annual Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. The document contains the Ramblers Local Work report, an overview of the things Ramblers aspires to do at a local level and the result of the consultation regarding the desirability of introducing a regional newsletter, which was not to go ahead with the project. Terry Howard proposed and David Gadd seconded that the report be accepted. All agreed.

Approval of the Annual Accounts

In the absence of the treasurer, the secretary reported that SYNED had received £5,500 from Central Office and had distributed £7,149 to Groups in the Area. The Area spent approximately £1,190 during the year on administering the Area, including production of the Annual Report, leaving a balance of £294. We paid out £4,539 from the Ivy Cowan Trust (£2,289 for Clarion Call and £2,250 for a defibrillator to the Edale Mountain Rescue Team), leaving a balance of £37,709.

The Area was heavily involved with the production and selling of the Clarion Call book. A grant of £2,289 from the Ivy Cowan Trust ensured production of 1,000 copies. To date the Clarion Call has cost £93 in postage etc and earned £5,536 in sales, leaving a balance of £3,155.

We received £480 from the Roy Cannon legacy this year, the money being spent on a bench and a Peak and Northern Footpath Society signpost.

Groups have asked Area for approximately £7,064 funding for the coming year. We will be contributing just £64 from our own funds, in line with Ramblers' reserve policy, towards our budget of £8,764 and will therefore be asking Central Office for £8,700, an increase from last year.

Our thanks are due to our independent examiner, Mr Andrew Milne.

It was proposed by David Gadd and seconded by Terry Howard that the accounts be accepted. All agreed.

Election of Officers

President: Allen Pestell thanked Roly Smith for his three years as president.

Christine Hewitt proposed and Mike Pye seconded that Lord David Blunkett be our next president. All agreed.

Vice Presidents: Mike Pye, Roly Smith, Cath MacKay and Terry Howard were elected en bloc. Proposed by Allen Pestell and seconded by Les Seaman. All agreed.

The following, proposed by Niki Speakman, seconded by Philip Lee, were elected as Area Council officers en bloc: Allen Pestell (Chair/Countryside), David Gadd (Secretary/Membership Secretary), Gavin Johns (Treasurer), Les Seaman (Access). Christine Whittaker (Information Officer).

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

Les Seaman explained that SYNED pays a subscription, and therefore is affiliated to, the Peak District Green Lanes Alliance, 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 Les Seaman and seconded by Jack Burland. All agreed.

Motions

"This AGM supports the shared (with cyclists) use of footpaths where appropriate. We call upon SYNED Area Council to join with other footpath and cycling organisations locally to promote a constructive approach to determining which paths may be suitable, and to promote considerate shared use of footpaths."

A considerable discussion ensued. Points were made that we need to be realistic and that we should be willing to share, that cycling is a fast-growing activity that is attracting a lot of funding which could be used to improve bridleways, that some routes are already shared with no problems, that many walkers are also cyclists so we should not think of this as an 'us' and 'them' situation, but a couple of members reported that they had been knocked down by cyclists (as had David Blunkett), that any upgrading of surfaces to accommodate cyclists should not be Tarmac, and there should be no wholesale changing of paths to cycleways. We also discussed how the decision whether to make a route suitable for shared use would be reached, with the feeling that it should be reached by the Local Access Forum after local consultation. It was accepted that some cyclists were unsympathetic with regard to the needs of walkers i.e. the need to give an audible warning of approach, the need to allow space between walkers and cyclists.

Voting was: In favour 10, against 8, abstentions 10.

The motion was therefore carried.

Delegates to General Council

Allen Pestell and Jez Kenyon were nominated to be the delegates for SYNED at General Council in Bangor, 7th/8th April. Nicki Speakman agreed to go as a non-voting representative.

Speaker's Address:

Philip Kerry, a Ramblers Trustee, said that he was a keen walker, having climbed Snowden as an 8-10 year old and that he was passionate about the National Trails. He asked for a show of hands of members who had been Ramblers for over 10 years, then 20, etc., showing the huge amount of experience of many Ramblers. Philip said that he had become a member two years ago, and he had become a trustee this year. The new CEO of Ramblers, Vanessa Griffiths, was uniting Ramblers, bringing in a culture change to bridge the gap between central office and members. General Council last April in Southampton had been very successful, with the accent on walking matters. Stuart Maconie had become our new national president and would be helpful to Ramblers re publicity in print, online and with broadcasts. Vanessa started 14 months ago and has since introduced new positions of Directors of Membership and of Fundraising and an election manifesto was produced prior to the last General Election. Other issues worthy of note are that we receive funding from the People's Postcode Lottery; the English Coast Path process is ongoing; Ramblers have produced a guidance document for local authorities on walkability; there were fourteen roadshows last year; an online forum for members is being piloted; the Ramblers historical pension deficit has been paid off, ensuring the long-term financial stability of Ramblers; there is a continuous focus on the fact that we are all part of one team; there is an acknowledgement that we are in a time of major change, with shared use, Brexit and an ageing population being major issues.

The priority for Ramblers is improving the infrastructure so that we can act effectively and quickly. To do this we need to invest in digital technology and data development. We must ensure that major campaigns engage people, that there is plenty of support for our volunteers in terms of information. We acknowledge that membership continues to decline and we are trying to address this as well as finding new partners and continuing to build relationships with current partners.

Susie Corfield, Ramblers Volunteering Manager, had been asked to up-date the meeting on specific issues. She began by referring to the decision that David Blunkett becomes our next president and the motion re shared use of footpaths by saying that she had been cycling near the Houses of Parliament and had noticed David Blunkett, only to cycle into a wall because she was too busy looking at him!

Ploughing and cropping: following the ploughing and cropping motion last year at General Council a national policy is being formed, calling for a better enforcement system. Ramblers will promote the policy, giving good examples. An update will be given at General Council.

Shared use: in 2017 at General Council there were two motions on shared use. Ramblers policy is that each request should be considered on a case by case basis whilst working with other user groups and should not be to the detriment of walkers. A working group has been formed, which has drafted a document to be distributed very soon, which will give guidance on how to respond to proposed changes to paths, etc.

Pathwatch: this was a survey of the status of footpaths. The pathwatch app has been developed into a "report-it" app, and is being regularly used, to make it possible to report a problem instantly. A sounding board of volunteers has been

established. Local authorities are asked if they want to be part of the process. The current system does not allow maintenance work to be captured so development of the system is continuing.

Local organisers: other charities use this system and in 2017 a pilot scheme was introduced by Ramblers. A huge range of skills were offered i.e. a landscape architect, lawyers, etc. There is no pressure on these people to join Ramblers. Volunteers are being trained in path maintenance, walking for health leadership, etc in 4-5 Ramblers areas.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): changes to legislation regarding data protection are being brought in. Ramblers have recruited a specialist to analyse what we need to do now. Essentially the new legislation will need organisations to ensure that each person is clearly happy to be contacted and to establish for how long that information can be held. Central Office will advise Areas and Groups what actions they need to take.

In a question and answer session Les Seaman pointed out that permission must be given by an individual if information, such as on rights of way matters, can be kept for many years and that evidence regarding footpath usage could go back many years. Jack Burland mentioned a paper cutting from the Sheffield Star from 14 years previously that was crucial in a court case.

John Horscroft, from Ride Sheffield, said that through his active life he had been a walker, a mountaineer and a cyclist, enjoying them all and allowing much enjoyment of the countryside. He stressed the point that we should not consider walkers and cyclists as being mutually exclusive because many walkers and cyclists get pleasure from both activities. John said that he originally met Terry Howard when they were both on the Stanage Forum and user groups were discussing issues and establishing relationships. Being involved with the Eastern Moors Partnership and the Local Access Forum he was struck by how much in common the different user groups had.

About eight years ago mountain bikers realised that cyclists had no body to represent them in discussions with land managers, walkers, horse-riders, etc. Ride Sheffield was formed and was given representation on the Local Access Forum. After representation, its main aim was to promote responsible cycling. People come to cycling via different ways. Having walked and climbed John was used to engaging with others but some cyclists don't because they have come to trail biking directly from trail centres where there is one route and high speeds can be enjoyed. If these experiences are transferred to the national park, without thought, then problems are likely. Ride Sheffield tries to address this problem by distributing leaflets encouraging cyclists to protect the trail i.e. not cycle in bad weather. The Peak Bike Code says 'Protect the Trail, Enjoy your Ride, Abide by the Countryside Code, Keep Smiling - always give way, chat to everyone'. John accepts that mostly they are preaching to the converted. Ride Sheffield puts something back into the environment by planting trees etc. An attempt is being made to set up a national body. They have several built trails, including one at Parkwood Springs, a course used by new riders through to Olympic hopefuls. This course received funding from Sport England, the South Yorkshire Forest and the European Union as well as fund-raising by Ride Sheffield.

John finished by stating that there were bigger issues connected with the National Park i.e. that it has 40% less funding than it did 5 years ago, Brexit, quarrying, poor farming practice, etc and that all user groups should work together to try to address these issues.

In a question and answer session the question of why all cyclists don't use a bell was raised. John said that the real issue is consideration for other users i.e. giving way to walkers in certain situations, ensuring that an audible warning, whether a bell or a cough, was given when appropriate and an awareness that walkers might have additional needs such as a hearing or visual impairment. He pointed out that they would love to go into schools to begin the education process but that they were a voluntary organisation and lack of time prevented this.

Any Other Business

Les Seaman referred to a document jointly published by The British Horse Society, the Byways and Bridleways Trust, the Open Spaces Society and Ramblers titled 'How public access can be improved post Brexit'. Les thought that a contentious issue was that payments should be made to landowners to provide additional access or improvements to existing access. Les said that Ramblers fought for years, until the CRoW Act, not to make payments to landowners. Susie Corfield said that she understood that the new policy would only apply to landowners who could demonstrate compliance and that additional funding would only be for new paths or improvements. Jack Burland said that Ramblers had always supported grants to landowners. Mike Pye said that payments were linked to Common Agricultural Policy and that it should make no difference to payments for the upkeep of paths. Susie Corfield said that she will ask the person responsible in central office to respond to Les.

2018 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.
26th February
4th June
3rd September
26th November

2018 General Council 7th/8th April: University of Bangor

2018 'Spirit of Kinder' 2.00pm, 21st April, Friends Meeting House, Manchester

2019 AGM: 2.00pm, Saturday, 26th January
Barnsley and Penistone Group to host.

Area website: www.synedramblers.org.uk

National website: www.ramblers.org.uk