

## **MINUTES of the 33rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the SOUTH DEVON RAMBLERS** Tues 8 November at 7pm The Palace Hotel Torquay

### **AGENDA**

#### **1. Welcome and apologies**

Apologies were received from Margaret English; Janice Went; Mary Moxham; Colin and Ann Grant; Jacky Newcombe; Dorothy Jefferson; Julian Fisher; Sue Barnes; Laurie Bruce; Trish Walker; Jennifer Pearn; Barry Mathews; Neil and Sue Kendrick; Trevor Fine; Wendy and Chris Coote.

64 members and guests attended.

#### **2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held in November 2015 were signed as a true record of the meeting.

#### **3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **4. Chairman's report**

Bernard announced the sad news of Mike Soper's death. He paid tribute to the breadth of Mike's contribution to South Devon and more widely. Messages of condolence have gone to Betty.

Bernard summarised the achievements of the year which included the continued attraction of new members, a full walks programme, managing finances successfully and achieving some publicity. He was particularly pleased to report the success of the SDR Facebook page which now has over 80 members who between them have posted 861 photos. Another success he highlighted was the tenth anniversary of the John Musgrave Heritage Trail. Bernard also drew attention to future plans, including an updated and revamped website, the completion of the 177 mile Offa's Dyke Trail, and a trip to Brittany.

#### **5. Secretary's report**

TS outlined her year's work with emphasis on PR events: the English Riviera Tourism Company event in the spring, Totnes Show in the summer and Walk magazine in the autumn. The next opportunity to promote Ramblers was at the Wellswood Xmas Street party 15th December and she asked for help and support in this and other PR events.

Val R suggested taking back copies of WALK magazine to place in surgeries. It was felt that this was a good idea.

## 6. Treasurer's report

Celia outlined the different funds: main, self-financing and the legacies.

A spreadsheet was made available for members to consult. The main account shows reserves of £772.33 which is within the Central Office guidelines of an acceptable level. She thanked members for responding to her plea to nominate the group when booking a holiday with Ramblers Worldwide so that commission can be paid to the group.

The self-financing also shows a healthy balance of £2,688.17

The residual sum in the Mike Mason legacy stands at £637.11

The balance on the John Musgrave legacy fund is £32,096.04. £25,000 of this is in a deposit account at Hampshire Trust Bank earning interest.

Celia thanked Alan R for using his skills to do much of the maintenance work on the JMHT, thus saving the group a lot of money.

CB thanked George Coles for his independent examination of the accounts and expressed her satisfaction that there was nothing to report. It was noted that the authorised signatories are the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. It was agreed a policy for the Authorisation of Purchases would be prepared and circulated to committee members.

## 7. Footpath Officer

Alan R amused everyone by illustrating his work with props.

He summarised the success of the Big Pathwatch campaign, particularly the wider participation by the public and thanked those members who had contributed to the work. A new campaign is about to be launched. This ambitious project is somewhat different, aiming to bring all footpaths up to a good state within 4 years. He asked members to look out for the stunt with which the new campaign is to be launched.

Alan's work has focussed mainly on the maintenance of the JMHT and he outlined the costs incurred. His handout also pointed to the work done to promote safety of the Trail and the escalation of concerns about safety at one point on the Trail to the Chief executive of Devon County Council.

What he described as 'normal' activity has, to an extent, given way to this maintenance work though he continues to respond to blocked footpaths, investigate closures and attend meetings of forums such as Area Footpath officers.

Time has precluded his active engagement on the Lost Ways initiative.

He used a letter from some ramblers who had found the JMHT difficult to follow as an incentive to improve waymarking and route descriptions.

Finally, Alan drew attention to the maps printed by Yellow Publications which he feels are a valuable additional resource for ramblers. These are larger scale, 1: 16 000, than the OS Explorer maps 1:25 000. Available online.

## 8. John Musgrave Heritage Trail Officer

Keith's message was one of thanks and achievement. Aims announced at last year's AGM have been met and he thanked all those who played a part. Keith added to Bernard's tribute to Mike Soper, outlining the important role he had played in the setting up of the John Musgrave Heritage Trail, being one of the 'gang of four' who saw the project through.

Amongst achievements, Keith highlighted the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the JMHT with over 80 enjoying a cream tea at The Livermead House. He thanked the walk leaders warmly.

The New Projects he listed last year: the commemorative seat in Maidencombe and the Viewing Platform at Greenway were both completed on time. While the seat came in at £1,495, plus ongoing maintenance costs, the platform was remarkably inexpensive at £110 and this was due in no small measure to the labour provided by National Trust.

Keith named and thanked the volunteers who worked on the JMHT monitoring scheme. The value of the scheme is clear – the Trail is in much better shape. He admitted making an assumption that volunteers would continue next year and added that if anyone wished to take a break, he would need to look for further volunteers.

Keith went on to announce future plans, including

- An annual JMHT walk to be included on the walks programme
- The continuation of the monitoring scheme
- Improvements to the guide book
- Downloadable navigation notes
- Downloadable circular walks
- Conversion of stiles to swing gates

## 9. Membership Secretary

Dorothy reported on figures from Central office showing our membership standing at 242 on average. This is roughly static with the September 2016 level three fewer than in September 2015.

The numbers on walks show an increase in participation on Thursdays, but lower turnout on Sundays, and for Oh So Easy and Tea shop walks.

4 walks have been cancelled due to bad weather.

## 10. Social Events

Val thanked members of the social committee and paid tribute to Jackie Mann who has served 10 years. Although Jackie is standing down this year she has expressed willingness to continue to organise the Christmas event and to produce the flyers.

Events enjoyed 2016 included the Rockfish supper, the sailing trip on the Vigilance and the JMHT excursion to Lulworth Cove.

Future events: as well as the upcoming Xmas dinner, Val pointed to the Devon Area AGM in February; a themed meal at The Guardroom on Berry Head; the final section of Offa's Dyke; a visit to Sharpham vineyard and an Archery event with Dynamic Adventures in October. She also spoke with great enthusiasm about the JMHT excursion planned for June 2017 to Slad Valley and the Laurie Lee Wildlife Way. She suggested members acquaint themselves with Laurie Lee's *Cider with Rosie* in readiness for the trip.

## **11. Holidays**

Les reminded members of holidays and trips enjoyed 2016: Part 6 of the Offa's Dyke - praising Bernard's achievement in getting so many to embark on this trail - as well as the Falmouth week, pictures of which were on view throughout the meeting. The Templer Way walk this year had been hit by difficulties in bus timetabling but there had been member participation on the Chagford Challenge.

2017 will see the final section of Offa's Dyke to complete the 177 miles.

A return to the Hotel Mona Lisa in Brittany is already planned for September and flyers and information were available at the meeting.

Les drew attention to the altered route of the Templer Way and suggested a way to manage bussing issues by hiring a minibus. Abbots Way and the Chagford Challenge will be scheduled for those members who wish to take on these more strenuous walks.

A holiday for 2018 has not yet been planned but some destinations were 'in the pot' including the Cotswolds, Kent and Yorkshire. Les is standing down after 5 enjoyable years.

## **12. Walks Co-ordinator**

Neil was unexpectedly unable to attend the AGM but he had submitted a brief report which was read by Dorothy. He reported that members had come forward with sufficient offers to lead, enabling him to compile the programme in good time.

Neil is standing down from the committee.

## **13. David Hinchliffe: Area Secretary**

David introduced himself, relating how he had come to being involved in Ramblers and explaining the role played by Area. With a staff of around 60 at Central Office and at that time a membership of 100,000 the need for support

for local groups was clear. He briefed the members on the role of Area, speaking up for walkers on various bodies and looking after our interests. Instead of the accustomed Annual Report this year, Area are going to issue an Impact Report, a full colour leaflet, utilising members' photos as far as possible. In addition to the Area AGM in February, David also flagged a Members' and Volunteers' Day on 25 February 2017, a free event for which it will probably be necessary to register beforehand. There will be workshop sessions morning and afternoon, eg dealing with emergencies, improving navigational skills. Lunch will be provided and there will be led walks.

#### *SHORT BREAK*

#### **14. Speaker: Steve Rose, Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team**

Tessa described Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team's work and introduced Steve Rose as a volunteer who had been an active call out member for more than 20 years. Steve elaborated on the breadth of their work and their geographical reach. He talked also about their use of search dogs for impenetrable areas.

Steve started by giving some valuable tips for surviving hazardous conditions. He went over emergency procedures – how to summon assistance, what types of assistance to give to ensure the best possible outcome in the event of a casualty. Attention was drawn to defibrillators, potential life-savers which are simple to use.

His short talk gave us a thirst for more and he was pleased to have been approached about delivering further, more detailed first aid sessions in 2017. A collection for his organisation was taken.

#### **15. Health and Safety: Val Rose**

In her vote of thanks to Steve Rose, Val reminded the audience of the form we like members to complete and carry in their rucksack so that in the event of an emergency, any medical conditions and contact numbers are easily found. Over 100 forms have already been given out.

#### **16. Election of Officers**

At this point in the proceedings Bernard stepped down as Chair. Tessa gave the very welcome news that he was willing to stand for re-election and checked to see if there were any other nominees. There were no contenders.

Bernard was proposed by John Mellor and seconded by Reg Tarling. Approval was unanimous.

The following appointments followed a similar pattern:

<b>POST</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>PROPOSER</b>	<b>SECONDER</b>
Secretary	Tessa Smith	Cris El Nahas	Les Grant
Treasurer	Celia Broom	Fred White	June Hayman
Footpath Officer	Alan Robinson	Val Rose	Richard Eastment
JMHT Officer	Keith Probert	Tessa Smith	Chris Wood
Membership Secretary	Dorothy Webley	Jackie Mann	Eric Evans
Holiday Co-ordinator	<i>this post will be temporarily covered by the committee</i>		
Social Committee	Val Rose and Paddy Jewry	Marguerite James	Dave Lee
<i>additionally</i>	Rosie Rayner	Tessa Smith	Chris Wood
Extra committee member	Maggie Cahm	Tessa Smith	Ken Nicholas
Walks Coordinator	Eric Evans	Paddy Jewry	David Meldrum
Independent examiner	George Coles	Fred White	Dorothy Webley

This completed the election of officers. Bernard warmly thanked all who have served on the committee

### **17. Any other business**

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 9.53pm

*Tessa Smith*

*9 November 2016*