

MINUTES of the 34th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the SOUTH DEVON RAMBLERS Wed 8 November at 7pm The Redcliffe Hotel, Paignton

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Margaret English; Janice Went; Bill and Maralyn Becher; Laurie Bruce; Margaret and Bob Alford; Dave and Liz Lee; Don Cockman; Dorothy Jefferson. Apologies were also given for Judith Mills. 60 members attended.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held in November 2016 were signed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. ANNUAL REPORT

Bernard outlined the format of the report which was to cover three main areas:

- (i) Who? – all about the membership.
- (ii) What do we do and where do we go?
- (iii) How is this made possible?

- (i) Bernard started by acknowledging the strength and commitment of the committee and he extended his thanks to them. One of 12 groups in Devon Area, the origins of South Devon Ramblers date back to 1982. Current membership stands at 248, 13 more than 2016
Tessa explained the rationale behind the mailing list that she is compiling, inviting anyone who felt they may not be on the list to add their email address, or equally well, to indicate their wish to unsubscribe.
It was stressed that the newly updated SDR website remains the main tool of communication, this is where to go for the most up to date information. Julian was thanked for updating the site regularly.
Facebook serves a purpose in PR, encouraging more members to share their news but this site is primarily for chatter rather than business.
- (ii) Bernard quoted a range of figures gleaned from the Membership Secretary's assiduous analysis, showing the number of miles walked, the percentage of members taking part regularly in a ramble, and the fact that only 4 out of 126 walks this year were cancelled.

Tessa demonstrated how wide-reaching the activities of the group are with a range of events superbly organised by Val, Paddy and Rosie. Forthcoming events were also highlighted: Rosie is working hard on the Christmas lunch and the social committee is also working on a talk by the Estuaries Officer from the AONB, plus a visit to a Devon longhouse.

Bernard was at pains to point out how we want to look out and care for our members, for example, by carrying First Aid kits on walks and encouraging them to recuperate carefully after illness or surgery. Walk leaders, back markers and marshals were also thanked for the part they play in our safety.

Tessa expanded on the theme that SDR is not just about walking. As well as walking and socialising, there are opportunities for learning and personal development too: the part played by Chris Wood in leading the Navigation Course was acknowledged and it is very much a positive to witness participants from 2017 further strengthening our pool of leaders.

Still on the theme of safety, it was reported that 20 members attended a highly enjoyable First Aid day in November so there are more people to act in an emergency. This session was funded by the Dr Mike Mason legacy. A number of members attended the Ramblers Roadshow in February 2017 where dealing with emergencies was one of the workshops. Others explored Public Rights of Way (PROW) and leading walks.

The cultural side of things was also covered this year with the annual John Musgrave excursion to Slad Valley where the group enjoyed walking the Laurie Lee Wildlife Trail. So called 'non walkers' wandered around the Rococco Gardens in Painswick. A new 'cultural' event is taking shape for 2018 as we make plans to walk the Coleridge Way in the Quantocks

Bernard's project to walk Offa's Dyke was successfully completed in 2017 and the huge amount of work this entailed for Bernard was acknowledged. His fourth trip to France was equally successful, 40 members enjoying both the walks and a memorable river cruise. Once again a DVD had been prepared for participants, at considerable cost in time to Bernard.

The plans for a walking holiday in the Isle of Man were outlined with thanks being extended to Diane Baker who first suggested and gave shape to the idea and Maggie who has worked hard to bring together the offer. Maggie had prepared a display and attention was drawn to the flyers and to the requirement for a deposit by the end of November 2017.

- (iii) At this point Bernard looked at how all of the activities enjoyed by the group are facilitated and to begin this section he paid tribute to the committee.

He then zoned in on the work undertaken in particular by the retiring Footpath Officer, Alan Robinson, summarising and applauding his extensive work on waymarking, the John Musgrave Heritage Trail (JMHT), the SWCP and PROW matters.

Keith was also highlighted as a 'facilitator' by acting as 'superb guardian' of the JMHT, one of the groups main assets. Keith voiced his sadness at the loss of two of his Trail Monitors and asked for offers to take on those sections in order to persevere with this scheme which keeps the trail in good order and alerts him to any matters needing attention.

Finally, by way of underlining how this is all made possible, Bernard gave the key figures of the accounts as follows:

Main account £1,003.57

Self-financing balance stands at £871.12

Dr M Mason legacy £624.11

JM legacy £31,936.98

Bernard thanked the Treasurer, Celia, for her painstaking stewardship of the group's finances. He drew attention to the handouts which allowed attendees to study the accounts in finer detail. The accounts had been examined and approved by our independent examiner, George Coles to whom thanks were also extended.

Summarising the year's achievements, Bernard reiterated the thriving membership, the full walking programme, the healthy finances, the completion of the Offa's Dyke Trail, the newly updated website including Google maps and Flickr, bringing the Deer Park issue to an acceptable conclusion, raising £240 for the SWCP and the continuing expansion of our Facebook group.

Objectives for the coming year were also listed: the Coleridge Way; to find a new project for the future by way of a long distance walking route; encouraging more interaction with the website by using Flickr ; the Isle of Man holiday; deciding on a destination for 2019; maintaining support for our members as well as a full committee.

Finally, Bernard thanked the two outgoing members of the committee, Rosie and Alan and paid further tribute to the late Les Grant who had been a long serving member of the committee as well as a dear friend.

QUESTIONS

Bernard invited the members of the committee to stand up and take questions.

- John Mellor thanked the committee for their hard work and this met with applause.

- Don McKnight said he missed the annual reference to total mileage and Dorothy was able to satisfy his curiosity by reporting that over the 8 years she has been monitoring these figures, the group has walked the equivalent of 6 times round the Equator.
- Arthur Cole queried which member had walked the most! Dorothy was able to say which members had been out on the most walks.
- Margaret Bradshaw had been unable to get on to the First Aid course and asked if another could be arranged? Celia felt this was a very good use of funds and one which would be further supported by Central Office if need be. BP pointed out that a First Aid kit was routinely carried, even on holiday. Val suggested an addition to the kits following the First Aid course.
- Julian directed a question about a PROW in Churston to Alan and he was able to explain the state of play. When he went recently to collect some evidence, he was somewhat thwarted by the actions of local residents who had removed the offending boards themselves! The matter is ongoing.

5. George Coles: Area Vice- Chairman

George Coles was introduced as Vice Chairman of Devon Area, erstwhile Media Secretary and currently also Chair of the Steering Committee set up to raise funding for the walking route of the Dartmoor Way Project.

George opened with complimentary remarks about the SDR committee and then went on to outline the role of Area, a 'second layer' between central Office and the Devon Groups. He gave examples of the work done by Area: the co-ordinating of group finances, footpath issues, access and environmental issues as well as encouraging good governance.

George also referred to Walksfinder and the Area leaflet which was updated and re-printed this year, both key instruments in the marketing toolkit for Ramblers.

George also highlighted the Walking Festivals, both winter and summer and extended a warm invitation to anyone who would be willing to coordinate those activities for Area.

The Area AGM is to be held on 10 February 2018 at Buckfast Abbey and leaflets for this were distributed.

6. Election of Officers

At this point in the proceedings Bernard stepped down as Chair. Tessa expressed her delight 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 Robert Woolcott. Approval was unanimous.

Bernard pointed out that two members of the committee were standing down. The following appointments were made for 2017/18:

POST	NAME	PROPOSER	SECONDER
Secretary	Tessa Smith	Richard Eastment	Maggie Cahm
Treasurer	Celia Broom	Dorothy Webley	Reg Tarling
Footpath Officer	Bob Ward*	Chris Wood	Trish Walker
JMHT Officer	Keith Probert	Cris El Nahas	June Hayman
Membership Secretary	Dorothy Webley	Verity Vass	Reg Tarling
Holiday Co-ordinator	<i>this post will be temporarily covered by the committee</i>		
Social Committee	Val Rose and Paddy Jewry	Marguerite James	Verity Vass
<i>additionally</i>	Steve Wise*	Paddy Jewry	Arthur Cole
Extra committee member	Maggie Cahm	Marguerite James	Verity Vass
Walks Coordinator	Eric Evans	Jackie Mann	Julian Fisher
Independent examiner	George Coles	Chris Wood	Tessa Smith

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

7. Any other business

Val R raised the recent Countryfile Ramble in aid of Children in Need. Responding to interest from the members she proposed that SDR support this initiative in 2018, embracing the walks in the relevant week, normally in October, to raise some funds for Children in Need. She suggested a donation of £2 to £5. John M referred to the drive by Millets for the same purpose. Celia B was concerned that such a request for donations would follow too closely on the SWCP drive. However, this did not dampen enthusiasm for supporting the event next year.

There being no other business, Bernard concluded the meeting at 8.15pm

