

LODDON VALLEY RAMBLERS

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 2nd November 2011 at Billingbear Golf Club starting at 7.30pm.

1 APOLOGIES

The meeting was attended by 28 people. Apologies were received from Chris King.

2 MINUTES OF MEETING

(i) The minutes of the last AGM held on 3rd November 2010 were adopted.

Proposed by Graham Smith.

Seconded by Barbara Curtis.

The meeting approved the minutes.

ii) There were no matters arising.

3 REPORTS

Chairman

David Turner gave the following report:

Thank you all for coming this evening and a big thank you to Judith Clark for organising this evening.

As we have no speaker, I am afraid that Ray and I are the main entertainment this evening, so you will be glad to hear that I will be keeping my report as short as I can.

So what have been the highlights over the past year?

Walking

My first highlight is the coach walks that were organised by David Moffett. These have proved very popular. On 26th June, 35 members joined our first coach walk along the South Downs Way with a visit to Winchester and on 4th September, the number had risen to 47 for a walk along the Cotswold Way with a visit to Bath. Following a survey of the coach walk participants' preferences, David is now planning coach walks to Brighton and Salisbury next summer.

Graham Smith and his team have made good progress developing the Wokingham Orbital Walk or WOW for short. Since the last AGM, the whole 55 mile walk around the Wokingham boundary has been pre-walked and written up. The route was then refined and then split into ten sections between car parking points. These sections have now been re-written to a harmonised standard and re-walked to be sure that the instructions are correct and easy to follow. The WOW team are now considering how this walk will be published and considering adding historical and other points of interest, information on public transport between stages and producing maps for each stage. To help with this, support is now being sought from Wokingham Borough Council.

Thanks to Graham Smith and the Walk Leaders, we have continued to provide a full programme of both long and short walks on Thursdays and Sundays. We also included midweek evening walks in our summer programme and we are going to trial Tuesday long walks in March and April next year.

Holidays

Our walking weekends have again been a great success. In April, Pat Perridge organised a weekend based in Hartington in the Derbyshire Dales and the weekend before last, John Kingdom organised a weekend based in Aldeburgh on the Suffolk coast. Both of these holidays were fully subscribed, the hotels were of a high standard and the walking was good.

In June a group of 22 enjoyed a week of walking in the French Alps staying in Bellevaux, near Lake Geneva. If you missed out on this holiday, Barbara Curtis has organised a return trip to Bellevaux in June next year (watch out for the flier with the next Newsletter)

Also a winter sunshine holiday walking in La Gomera (one of the Canary Islands) this December, has been offered by John and Lynda Ledger.

Next year we have arranged:

- o A walking weekend in April based in Wroxeter near Shrewsbury, that has been organised by Derek Smith and applications have now been closed with 43 members signed up.
- o If you missed a place on that weekend then Richard Kenton is organising a walking weekend next October staying in Llangattock on the edge of the Brecon Beacons in Wales.
- o In addition, next September Nick Price has organised a 27 mile linear walk across the Isle of Wight from East to West, with an overnight stay in Newport, and believe it or not we are now starting to organise the two walking weekends for 2013.

Social events

Judith Clark has had a busy first year as our Social Secretary. As well as organising this evening, back in February she organised a skittles evening at the Jack O'Newbury and in July she organised a quiz evening at the Finchampstead Ratepayers Hall, which included a walk and a Fish & Chip supper. Both these events were an opportunity to socialise with other members of the group and have some fun and as they were well supported we intend to organise similar events in 2012.

Other

A main concern that we have within the Ramblers has been the serious fall in membership in recent year. To highlight this, the Loddon Valley Group has fallen from just over 500 when I took over as Chairman to just over 400 now. I would welcome any thoughts on why this has happened and what might be done to reverse this trend.

As a reminder, the Area AGM is on Saturday 26th November 2011 and is being hosted by the West Berks Group in the Woolhampton Village Hall (on the Bath Road, RG7 5RE). There is a walk which starts at 10.45am and the formal meeting starts at 2.00pm.

Lastly, if you would like to sample a section of the WOW then don't forget my mince pie and mulled wine walk on Sunday 18th December 2011.

Footpaths, Countryside and Access

Ray Sharp gave the following report:

Good evening. It is amazing how quickly the year has flown by but I think we have all enjoyed some pretty decent walking helped by the very pleasant autumn. As with previous years I was kept busy throughout this year by my Footpath Officer colleagues and you, our members, reporting problems. I am pleased to say all the Footpath Officers have stood their ground and we go into another year with all the parishes covered. They know I appreciate their efforts and I thank them publicly and also any of you who have reported problems to us.

Rights of Way:

As reported this time last year, taken as a whole the 143 miles of public rights of way in Wokingham Borough Council are quite good. We reported 56 individual path defects to WBC which was down from 62 last year. At the time of preparing this report there were 5 issues outstanding which is an improvement on last year. These reports covered just about all that can go wrong with public rights of way. Last year one of our members present suggested it would be good to hear a breakdown of the problems. So here they are:

Defective stiles	9
Defective kissing gates	1
Other defective gates	2
Failure to reinstate after ploughing	6
Surface destruction due to construction	2
Crop intrusion	6
Ground foliage as opposed to crop	3
Obstructions, tree/temp buildings	6
Fence issues	2
Way marking	3
Surface water	4
Defective bridge	1
Defective steps	1
Defective handrail	1
Illegal diversion	1
Collapsed drain	1
Lack of restriction bollards	1
Fly tipping	3
WBC mapping errors	3

Planning Applications:

I received a number of applications most of which had no affect on adjacent rights of way or could not be used as a lever to gain new ones so I did not oppose them.

There were other applications that did require comments either to oppose them or highlight the need to try for new or improved rights of way.

F/2010/2266 for Rushy Mead. I opposed this application in the interests of safety. The evidence at the time suggested that one of the wind turbines was sited too close to an Arborfield bridleway and that flicker could spook a horse and cause it to bolt. The inference being that a rider and horse could be injured and a runaway horse could hit a walker. The application was refused.

F/2011/1457 for Lockey Farm in Arborfield. With the help of Dave Ramm I did try to get an additional path to link into Arborfield footpath 16. This suggestion is also in Wokingham's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The application was approved and we did not gain a new path.

Culham Court, Remenham. I received copious applications for the deer park on this site. With the help of Dave Ramm and a site meeting with Remenham parish Council and the landowner we were able to influence the location of deer park fencing along the Thames Trail. None of the footpaths will be altered.

F/2011/1570 & 11/01096/FUL for the old brewery at Whitley. I replied to both these applications and spoke at the Reading planning meeting in an attempt to get improvements to the rights of way along the southern and southwest boundaries. The applications were approved with conditions. Reading Borough Council was to request Tesco to consult with the ramblers association about improving the footpaths. I am awaiting a call.

Legal Issues in Progress:

The proposal to make Earley footpath 15 a wider path to take pedestrians and cyclists was all agreed and we were satisfied. Since then the landowner has reneged on the deal and is not prepared to give up sufficient land to allow a 2.5 metre fenced in dual use path. I have withdrawn the rambler's acceptance and the case is back with the legal team at WBC.

The footpath claim over Henley Regatta land is still ongoing.

Path Orders

In addition to path orders for the above mentioned Earley footpath 15 I have received a confirmation that Arborfield 20 will have a small diversion. I am pleased to say that the council and the landowner listened to a suggestion from Dave Ramm to round off a 90 degree bend to make it less intimidating.

Meetings:

I have had two meetings this year with my Footpath Officer colleagues and this has proved to be valuable and something we expect to continue.

Local Access Forum.

I continue to be a member of the Mid and West Berks Local Access Forum. Part of my duty is to be an observer at the Maidenhead and Windsor LAF and the convener of meetings for the Wokingham ROWIP working group. The working group make up is now Ian Young representing cycling, our very own Derek Smith representing walkers and Wokingham councillor Simon Weeks. I would like to enlist someone with equestrian interests so if you know of anyone I would be pleased to hear about them.

The future.

I am gaining some ground in my efforts to get WBC to chase up landowners who do not reinstate cross field footpaths after ploughing. The same landowners then do nothing about the ensuing crop and as you know there is nothing worse than pushing through 6 foot high maize and oil seed rape. I am having a big push on this issue and will be most grateful if you could advise me as soon as you encounter such conditions.

Treasurer

Kath Parker gave the following report:

The Auditor's Report is for the financial year starting 1st October 2010 and finishing 30th September 2011.

Balance Sheet as at 30th September 2011

Assets	£
Cash at bank	1,575
Debtor	<u>697</u> **
	2,272
Less Liabilities	
Funds held for weekend breaks	0
Accounts payable	<u>0</u>
	<u>0</u>
Net Assets	<u>2,272</u>
Representing	
Surplus	
At beginning of year	1,541
Surplus for the year	<u>731</u>
	<u>2,272</u>

**Debtor - Deposit paid to Wroxeter Hotel for April 2012 weekend away. No income received during the accounting period.

Adoption of accounts was:

Proposed by Daphne Perridge.

Seconded by John Kingdom

The meeting approved the accounts for the year ending 30th September 2011.

4 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

Pat Perridge had asked to stand down as Newsletter Editor but was happy to remain as website administrator.

Daphne Perridge had asked to stand down as Publicity Officer but was willing to stand as Newsletter Editor.

Proposed by John Kingdom.

Seconded by Barbara Curtis.

The meeting approved Daphne`s appointment.

David Moffett had agreed to stand as Publicity Officer.

Proposed by Derek Smith.

Seconded by Pat Perridge.

The meeting approved David`s appointment.

All other members of the committee had expressed their willingness to stand for re-election and, there being no other nominations, the committee was duly re-elected en bloc.

Proposed by Jenny Smith.

Seconded by Richard Kenton.

The meeting approved the reappointment of the remainder of the committee.

5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ray Sharp proposed a vote of thanks to David Turner for his leadership as Chairman of the group which was wholeheartedly supported by the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at approximately 9.30 pm.