

LODDON VALLEY RAMBLERS

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 30th October 2019 at Barkham Village Hall starting at 7.30pm.

1 APOLOGIES

The meeting was attended by 45 people including Andrew Fletcher, Footpath Officer for Wokingham Borough Council, who was invited as a guest. Apologies were received from Barbara Curtis, Sue Robson, Sue Gatenby, Moira Turner, Mike Evans, Bobbi Ginty and Martin Labram.

2 MINUTES OF MEETING

(i) The minutes of the last AGM held on 31st October 2018 were adopted.

Proposed by Karen Durie.
Seconded by Nick Ballard.

The meeting approved the minutes.

ii) There were two matters arising:

- Regarding Tuesday walks, it was pointed out that there had been instances of consecutive longer (14 – 15 mile) walks and that these might be spread out amongst the more typical 11 – 13 mile walks. Regarding Thursday walks, with the “Easier” walks of 4 miles now introduced, it was suggested that the regular Thursday walks should be 5 – 6 miles. Richard Hatton undertook to review these issues with the Walks Organiser, Nick Johnson, and these suggestions have now been taken up.
- Regarding the call for suggestions for different social events, several ideas were put forward. These were subsequently considered by the whole committee and some have been taken up.

3 REPORTS

Chairman (David Moffett)

As last year, I have to ask in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations, if you are happy to have your name recorded in the Minutes. If not please chat with Derek Smith after the meeting. [There were no objections, so full names of people who were active in the meeting are used].

I would like to thank Jo Fox, Shirley Chesterman and Elaine Holloway for organising the AGM, with the help of several members.

This is my Report to the Annual General Meeting of Loddon Valley Ramblers.

It is a look back at last year’s activities by the Group and look forward to some plans for next year. But these plans are not complete, so if any Members wish to add to these plans, with new activities in the countryside or social events, then this is an opportunity, probably best dealt with in the Any Other Business section of the meeting.

The Group provides a selection of walks and has been able to form working parties to maintain footpaths and replace difficult stiles in Wokingham Borough.

I feel we can measure the success of the Walks Programme by the attendance on these walks. Nick Johnson’s report will provide more information in detail of our Walks Programme.

Steve Vale's Report expands on the efforts of these Working Parties. I won't steal Steve's thunder by saying how many gates we installed this year - but it is worth noting that 28 members were involved in fixing these gates and improving footpaths in the area.

These gates were funded by grants from Wokingham Borough and several Parishes; together with royalties from the Rambling for Pleasure Books published by East Berkshire Ramblers. It is Ray Sharp's project management skills that kept these teams employed through the year.

I noted last year that for the group to flourish we need to attract new members with a varied social programme.

The Leaders' Dinner & Dance, efficiently planned by Martin Labram, has become a regular fixture in January as an opportunity to thank our Walk Leaders for their time spent planning pre-walking and leading walks. We still need more leaders to provide a comprehensive programme, so I will outline later some plans to encourage new leaders.

In March, we had our second Barn Dance, organised by Mary Childs with Nick Johnson, which was probably too successful with Finchampstead Memorial Hall nearly bursting with over 80 dancers.

Our Spring Weekend break was held in Dovedale with 79 members enjoying walks and entertainment provided by Ellen Holmes, David Bromley, Richard Hatton, John & Lynda Ledger, Jo & Dave Fox, Sally Ballard and Nick Johnson. We overcame the confusion of invoices from HF, and Richard recovered from a painful encounter with a pig.

Our foreign holiday to Bellevaux, organised by Barbara Curtis, provided a challenging selection of walks in the French Alps.

Our Summer Social was a Hog Roast planned by Bobbi Ginty and her team and a pleasant change from our Barbecues.

Finally, Linda Ashwell directed an excellent weekend in Kingcombe Nature Reserve with an interesting nature trail and walks led by local Ramblers' groups.

The Committee are already planning for 2020 and beyond.

Martin Labram is putting together the Leaders' Dinner at Sandmartins Golf Club.

Mary Childs is planning our next Barn Dance with Nick Johnson in March.

I mentioned that we need more Leaders, so Mike Evans has organised a Navigation and Leadership Course in April, with details in a flyer with our December Newsletter.

The Spring Weekend to Ilkley was oversubscribed and has a waiting list. Graham Smith, assisted by Derek Smith has visited the area to plan the walks.

We have booked the Hall & Field outside for a Summer Social in July and details will be finalised by the April newsletter.

By popular demand, we are returning to Coach Walks, as Graham Stagg has volunteered to restart them next year.

The Autumn Weekend will be held in Selworthy, Somerset with John Reddihough and a team planning walks with details in the December Newsletter.

Now sadly, the foreign break in Madeira was not viable, short of numbers, so Barbara Curtis is planning at short notice a week in Bellevaux. Please speak to her if you are interested and there will be a flyer in the next Newsletter.

Then, into 2021, we need some ideas for a Spring Weekend. If you want to be involved in organising a walking weekend, the Committee will help and we have some excellent guidelines to work from.

Mike Evans has started planning an Autumn Weekend in an HF country house in Bourton on the Water.

Some other thoughts being considered include a week in the Lakes or a foreign holiday in Minorca.

Next Year, 2020, is 25 years since the Group was formed. So Derek Smith and a small team have stated to plan a celebration on 2nd October at East Berkshire Golf Club – a date for your diary.

I am confident to report that the Group remains in a healthy position; providing a varied programme of walks and social activities.

Walks Organiser (Nick Johnson)

It has been a good year! We have not lost anyone, although there have been a few near misses. None of the walk leaders have got their party completely lost although some have generated a few additional miles.

Thursday short walks (approx. 6 miles) remain the most popular walks with an average of 27 people.

Sunday short walks, again, remain steady with an average of 21 people.

Sunday long walks were worrying with declining numbers but, scheduling a walk every other week, has shown a slight increase over the course of the year to an average of 10 to 11 people.

Tuesday long walks remain popular and one of our big successes with average turnouts of 16 people. We had 25 yesterday – probably as a result of the offer of a free pint to celebrate the leader's birthday.

Another success is the Thursday "Easy" walks showing an increase from 8 to 15 attendees over the year.

There have been a number of walks with an additional creative element, eg Linda Ashwell's Fish and Chip walk and River Cruise, Jo Fox's Beer Festival walk and Martin Dalton is investigating a London Walk in Spring 2020.

A joint walk with another Berkshire group was less successful owing to differing walk pace aspirations.

If anyone with creative ideas wishes to suggest such a walk, please let me know.

As always, we still need more walk leaders so volunteers will be welcomed.

Regarding resources, Graham Croucher has developed a car park data base of walk starts which is most useful as finding car parks with sufficient space is often the biggest challenge.

Finally, the Christmas Lunch Walk on Thursday 19th December is now fully subscribed.

Footpaths & Countryside (Steve Vale)

This has been my second year as Footpath Officer.

Alongside the day-to-day problems of reporting fallen trees, missing or broken signs and overgrowth, the two main highlights have been:

First the installation of no less than 14 gates across the Borough, replacing stiles and making access to the footpath network easier for all. The new gates are located in Hurst (6 gates),

Swallowfield (3 gates), Barkham (3 gates), Arborfield, and Wokingham Town. The gates have been purchased with the Ramblers' own funds, and with funds from St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council, Barkham Parish Council, Swallowfield Parish Council, and the Borough Council. Landowner permission is required before gates can be installed, and we are grateful for the cooperation of the landowners concerned.

In addition, we have replaced a stile near Swallowfield Church with a staggered barrier.

None of this could be done without the sterling work of Ray Sharp, who project manages all the installations tirelessly, and of a substantial number of volunteers drawn from our membership, whose enthusiasm to help seems to know no bounds, and to whom huge gratitude is due. I am sure that you would like to join me in appreciation of their efforts.

As well as the gate installations, groups of volunteers have also helped with path resurfacing at Riseley and in Shinfield, and with a footbridge replacement in Shinfield.

Second, the work we put in to LVR's response to Wokingham Borough Council's new 10-year Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Hard work by our team of parish Footpath Wardens has ensured that, when the final version early next year, the Plan will include virtually of the changes and new routes that we want to see put in place. Putting them in the Plan does not necessarily mean they will happen, of course, but at least gives us a firm base to work from.

I am also pleased to report that, following the appointment of Andrew Fletcher as its new Rights of Way Manager, Wokingham Borough Council continues to take its rights of way responsibilities seriously. As at 14th October, only a dozen or so of the 43 problems reported so far this year are outstanding.

One area where we have had success in 2019 is in tackling the problem of farmers allowing crops to grow over the line of footpaths. Following problems in previous years, we sought to target areas where they were likely to recur in 2019, and I am pleased to say that this has paid off, and paths have by-and-large been left clear this year. Wokingham Borough Council's enforcement procedures have helped with this.

The result is that (with a few notable exceptions), the footpath network in Wokingham Borough is well signposted, in good condition and trouble-free.

Challenges for the future are:

Continuing with stile conversions. We need to convert as many as we can, in pursuit of the aim of a stile-free borough, but the process of identifying stiles, obtaining landowner permission and securing the finding for gates is not easy. We have some provisional plans for 2020 in Hurst, Ruscombe and Remenham, but we are on the look-out for more possibilities. Please let me have any suggestions.

Making sure that as many as possible of the new routes set out in the 2020 to 2030 Rights of Way Improvement Plan become reality. Once the final version of the Plan is published, we will need to indentify early priorities and a plan of campaign.

Continuing to ensure that the footpath network is both protected and enhanced in the face of the large amounts of housing and road construction across the Borough. (In this context, it is worth noting that the pace of development may be slowing slightly, with a number of recent major planning applications rejected (at least for the time being), including the East Reading Mass Transit scheme, a major housing development at Cutbush Lane, and gravel extraction in Arborfield).

To meet these challenges, I will continue to need the excellent support provided by both LVR's Committee and the excellent team of parish Footpath Wardens. Up until recently we had a full team of 13 Wardens, although there is now a need for a replacement warden in Charvil. If

anyone here is interested in taking on the latter role (which is not arduous), please have a word with me later.

I hope that you will agree that 2019 has been a very positive year for Rights of Way, but there is always room to improve. I am always happy to receive any suggestions that could improve walkers' experiences. Please get in touch at any time – you can find my contact details on the website or in the newsletter.

Andrew Fletcher was asked to give a synopsis of his work as Wokingham Borough Council Rights of Way Officer which he duly did. He also explained that he now has additional responsibility for WBC Greenways Project.

4 ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS (Alan Drabble)

This is the final Accounts for the financial year to 30 September 2019 for Loddon Valley Ramblers, and my first report as Treasurer to the AGM. These Accounts have been examined by an Independent Examiner in accordance with the guidelines provided by The Ramblers.

I have provided copies of the Accounts, including an Income & Expenditure report plus a Balance Sheet. I hope you have had a chance to look at them. This year I have revised the format to one that I am more familiar with, and which allows you to compare last year's Accounts with those from the previous year.

Funding from The Ramblers is received by LVR via Berkshire Area, and was slightly lower than the previous year. Area funding is spent on all the items under "Main Account Expenditure" with the exception of "Practical Work". "Practical Work" is funded by a combination of "Other Area Funding" (from Ramblers) and "Grants". Last year we were fortunate to receive grant funding from Wokingham Borough Council, and from Shinfield, Hurst & Barkham Parish Councils.

I have shown a summary of the Self-funded Account on page 1, and details of Income & Expenditure for each SF activity on page 2. As you can see, all SF activities made a net contribution to funds except the Leaders' Dinner and the proposed Madeira holiday. The Leaders' Dinner is always subsidised as a way for the Group to say "Thank you". The Madeira holiday had to be cancelled because insufficient numbers were interested.

After deducting liabilities on the SF account (mostly pre-payments for the Yorkshire Dales weekend), the SF Reserve of £3,088 is higher than I would normally like, but the excess will be used to subsidise events to celebrate LVR's 25th Anniversary this year.

Finally, I would like to thank Kath Parker, my predecessor as Treasurer, for her patience and comprehensive documentation which made the handover period much smoother.

Approval of the Accounts:

Proposed by Ray Sharp.

Seconded by Jenny Smith.

The meeting approved the Accounts which are given as an appendix to these minutes.



Loddon Valley Ramblers

Annual Accounts for the year

01-Oct-18 to 30-Sep-19

Main Account

Income	2018/19	2017/18	Expenditure	2018/19	2017/18
Area funding	2,194.00	2,282.00	Walks programmes	397.50	480.56
Other Area Funding	3,553.72	2,089.00	Newsletters/publicity	871.14	724.24
Advertising income	0.00	120.00	Admin	147.02	137.60
Donations	80.00	240.00	Meetings/AGM	446.73	546.75
Grants	1,888.17	21.00	Practical work	3,975.31	2,924.55
Loan	0.00	0.00	Walks leader training	0.00	105.00
Other income	74.00	0.00	Other	29.98	0.00
Total income	7,789.89	4,752.00	Total expenditure	5,867.68	4,918.70
Net surplus/(deficit) on year		2018/19	1,922.21		

Self-funded Account Summary

Income	2018/19	2017/18	Expenditure	2018/19	2017/18
Day Walks	0.00	0.00	Day Walks	0.00	0.00
Holidays	26,560.00	46,095.00	Holidays	22,592.30	45,329.31
Social	3,365.50	2,687.00	Social	3,859.23	3,431.38
Other	465.00	0.00	Other	0.00	0.00
Total income	30,390.50	48,782.00	Total expenditure	26,451.53	48,760.69
Net surplus/(deficit) on year		2018/19	3,938.97		

Balance sheet

	30-Sep-18
Current account	3,646.10
Cash	0.00
Total funds at 30-Sep-18	3,646.10
add net surplus/(deficit) on year 2018/19	5,861.18
Total	9,507.28

	30-Sep-19
Current account	9,507.28
Cash	0.00
Grand total at 30-Sep-19	9,507.28

Main Account Balance	3,574.75
Liabilities	0.00
Main Account Reserve	3,574.75

Self-funded Balance	5,932.53
Liabilities	2,844.00
Self-funded Reserve	3,088.53

For Notes to the Accounts & details of the Self-funded Account, please see over.

Self-funded Account

Income	2018/19	Expenditure	2018/19
Other SF income	465.00	Other SF income	0.00
Leaders Dinner Feb 20	1,260.50	Leaders Dinner Feb 201	2,217.90
Barn Dance 2019	1,100.00	Barn Dance 2019	884.72
Dovedale Apr 2019	15,525.00	Dovedale Apr 2019	15,013.06
Bellevaux	1,650.00	Bellevaux	1,569.72
Hogroast Jul 2019	1,005.00	Hogroast Jul 2019	726.61
Kingcombe Sep 2019	5,250.00	Kingcombe Sep 2019	4,694.62
* Yorkshire Dales 2020	3,225.00	Yorkshire Dales 2020	381.00
Madeira 2020	910.00	Madeira 2020	927.00
Lulworth Sep 2018	0.00	Lulworth Sep 2018	6.90
* BBQ July 2020	0.00	BBQ July 2020	30.00
Total income	30,390.50	Total expenditure	26,451.53

* *Event has not yet completed*

Notes to the accounts

- 1 These Accounts have been prepared on the basis of Receipts & Payments, and show Gross figures.
- 2 For 2018-19 I have separated Newsletter/publicity costs from the costs for Walks programmes, and I have restated those costs for the year 2017-18 for comparison.
- 3 A change during the year means that money received from the Walking Partnership scheme can now be used for any purpose. The Committee has chosen to use it to subsidise the annual Leaders' Dinner.
- 4 Monies we receive from Local Authorities for the purposes of footpath improvements (mostly replacing stiles with gates) is shown under Grants. Other Area Funding is also used for this purpose.
- 5 We received £150 in error and this is shown under Other in the Self-funded account. This is likely to be recovered by the Bank in the next financial year.
- 6 The net surplus on the Main account is due to not spending on First Aid training (£300), and receiving £1,466 in Area funding for Gates that was spent in 2017-18.
- 7 LV Ramblers holds a nominal £100 bond with HF Holidays. Its current value is £104.99

Treasurer: Alan Drabble

Date:



27 October 2019

5 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE (David Moffett)

The attendees were advised that any member may stand for election to any committee position - whether currently filled or vacant - provided they have a proposer and a seconder.

There is one vacancy – Social Secretary.

There was no nomination or volunteer for Social Secretary and this remains open for members to offer their services. Furthermore, the current Website Administrator, Jo Fox, said she would be prepared to take up the position of Social Secretary if someone offered to take over her current position.

All other committee members stood for re-election.

There were no other nominations for the committee, so the existing members were approved en bloc.

Proposed by David Turner.

Seconded by Pat Perridge.

The meeting approved the re-election of the committee.

Christine Harvey had previously advised that she would like to stand for the election to the committee.

Proposed by Graham Croucher.

Seconded by Richard Hatton.

The meeting approved the election of Christine Harvey.

Although not a committee position, Steve Vale advised that we need a footpath warden for Charvil Parish.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

David Moffett advised the meeting that an alternative venue, possibly Finchampstead Memorial Hall, might be considered for the 2020 AGM. Linda Ashwell suggested that, as there are a number of golfers in LVR, a golf club venue might be considered which might be a cheaper (or even free) option.

There being no further business the formal meeting closed at approximately 8.30pm.