

31st Annual General Meeting

Saturday 7th October 2017 at 4.45pm – The Seeby Hall,

St. Michael's Pastoral Centre, Lower Church Road, Sandhurst, GU47 8HN

Present: 32 members including the committee

1. The Chairman's welcome

Shirley Poulton welcomed everyone and thanked David Hunt for leading the pre-meeting walk. Shirley asked the committee members to introduce themselves.

2. Apologies for absence

Received from: Dave, Helen & Richard Hooker; Richard Mosses; Sheila & Terry Dwyer; Anthea & Andrew Johnson; Janet Norris; Barbara Denyer; Esther Moore; Don & Nella Burnside; Maz New.

3. Approval of previous minutes and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved and there were no matters arising. Proposed by Kate Wratten, and seconded by Roger Jones.

4. Chairman's Report - Shirley Poulton

The Chairman's report is attached in the Appendix. There were no questions.

5. Treasurer's Report - Steve Wells

Steve Wells circulated to members a copy of the treasurer's report 2016-17.

Steve explained that SEBR funds are split into Main and Self-Funded. Funds in the Main account can only be spent on promoting The Ramblers, but Self -Funded funds can be spent anyway the committee decide.

The Main fund balance at the end of the year was £778.27, a reduction of £671.13 to 64% of the annual turnover – this is now in line with the band required by the Ramblers Association. £1,070 was spent on footpath works in Bracknell Forest.

On a turnover of £4,260.54, the Self- Funded balance at the end of the year was £1,564.52. This is £922.85 more than last year – but does contain £750 of prepayments for events in October. Introduction of a spreadsheet on Dropbox has significantly simplified the coordination between the Treasurer and the Social Events Organiser.

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The examiner Mr Dennis Wilkinson. has approved the accounts

Approval of financial report proposed by Penny Tomlin and seconded by Denise Jones

6. General Reports

Membership – Colin Bird

The Membership Secretary's report is attached in the Appendix. There were no questions.

Walks Programme – David Hunt

David Hunt reported that the website continues to work smoothly and David ensures that walk details are put on the main RA website. However, gaps in the programme are often only filled at short notice.

There was considerable discussion about the walks programme – points made included:

- There are more gaps than previously – this doesn't look good to visitors to the website who may want to plan in advance.
- Proposed that we need a Sunday Short Walks Coordinator There were no volunteers at the meeting.
- We continue to be short of walks leaders:
 - Help is available from the committee members (and others) for anyone willing to start leading walks. David Hunt is happy to enter walks on the programme for anyone who has difficulty.
 - Suggested that Wednesday walks could be repeated on Sundays.
 - Suggested that we develop a library of walks to avoid the need for people to create new walks.

Two actions for the committee:

1. Consider how we encourage Leaders to enter walks well in advance.
2. Consider how to encourage and help new walk leaders.

Website – Douglas Buchanan

The Webmaster's report is attached in the Appendix. There were no questions

Social Events– Douglas Buchanan

The Webmaster's report is attached in the Appendix. Douglas Buchanan highlighted that the group does not aim to make a profit on social events – but must ensure that they are not loss making. The price is set on the predicted number of attendees – this year attendances have been higher.



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The meeting applauded Douglas for his much-appreciated efforts and hard work organising the social events.

Publicity - Brian Poulton

The Publicity Officer's report is attached in the Appendix.

There was discussion about potential recruitment events. There will be a Rotary Club Autumn Fair on 21st October – will consider whether anyone from SEBR can attend. Subsequent to the Meeting it has been arranged that Brian & Shirley Poulton will represent our Group with a stand at this event.

Countryside – Richard Mosses

The Countryside Officer's report is attached in the Appendix. There were no questions

Footpaths – Mike Abbott

Mike Abbott reported on 3 footpath issues:

- Electric fence on footpath in Chobham reported to Surrey County Council
- Changes on Warfield FP5 reported to Bracknell Forest Footpath Ranger.
- Proposal to be made to Bracknell Forest to replace 3 stiles Three Castles Way (Crowthorne FP8)

Holidays – Janet Norris

A report on group holidays is attached in the Appendix. Roger Jones read Janet's report to the meeting in her absence.

Janet is stepping down from the role of Holiday Organiser. Roger Jones expressed thanks on behalf of the Group to Janet for all her work organising holidays over many years.

The chair asked if anyone would be willing to take on this role – there were no Volunteers at the meeting.

Kate Wratten suggested that the website could be used by members to advertise proposed holidays that other members may be interested in. Douglas Buchanan offered to organise this on the website.

Sunday Long Walks

Barry Leach encouraged members to try the longer walks on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month – they are not as long as they used to be with an average length of 8 miles. He pointed out that many members had walked 8 miles on the Malvern Holiday.



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Barry highlighted that the Sunday Long Walks are set on the programme through to January which illustrated the advantage of having a coordinator for these walks.

7. Election of Officers and Committee

Pat Menzies has stepped down as a general committee member – the Chairman thanked her for her contribution.

The Chairman suggested that the officers and committee willing to stand again could be re-elected en-masse as there had been no nominations received contesting any of these positions. Proposed by David Fisher, seconded by Denise Jones. Approved by the meeting.

The Committee and Officers for 2017/18 will be:

Chairman - Shirley Poulton

Treasurer - Steve Wells

Secretary & Membership Secretary – Colin Bird

Publicity Officer- Brian Poulton

Walks Programme Editor - David Hunt

Countryside Secretary & Area Representative - Richard Mosses

Webmaster & Social Events Organiser - Douglas Buchanan

Footpath Secretary – Mike Abbott

Committee Member - Andy Young

General Committee Members – 1 vacancy

Non-Committee Members:

Sunday Long Walks co-ordinator - Barry Leach

Sunday Short Walks co-ordinator - Vacant

Wednesday Walks co-ordinator - Vacant

Holidays Organiser - Vacant

8. Election of Honorary Examiner of Accounts

Dennis Wilkinson was nominated by Steve Wells, seconded by Douglas Buchanan and carried unanimously.

9. Any Other Business

Janet Norris had asked the meeting to consider varying the location of the AGM. The committee will consider this at its next meeting.

The Meeting ended at 6.20pm.

Appendix

Committee Reports

Chairman's Report - Shirley Poulton

The Group continues to benefit from walks both long and short although at times we do struggle somewhat to fill in the gaps. David Fisher continues to offer his South Hill Park walk and Jackie Hobbs continues with her Horseshoe Lake walk. We had two new members join us this year, Alan Hoskins and Eleanor who have contributed to the Walks Programme by offering historic walks. Only last Wednesday there was one in Reading and prior to that one in Windsor. They were well received and attracted a good attendance and have added something very different to our Programme so thank you very much to them and thank you to all our Walk Leaders.

The 2017 annual lunches were held in February at The Bull in Arborfield. The food, venue and walks were well received with a good attendance on both days. The proposed dates this year are Wednesday 21st and Sunday 25th February at the Shepherds House, Bracknell. Our website will be used for you to select and pay for your meal.

Our social events have been plentiful and varied this year and very well received. I will leave it to Doug Buchanan, our Social Secretary, to give a more detailed report on this. Please give Doug a round of applause for all the hard work he continues to put in.

The Committee continue to meet up some 3 or 4 times a year unless there is an urgent need for something to be discussed. We make use of email for corresponding with each other which works very well.

We have funded 7 gates this year for Rob Solomon, Bracknell Forest Ranger. Steve Wells, our Treasurer, has set out the figures for this in his report. There are photographs of these works on the publicity table. Brian Poulton instigated the purchase of new SEBR gate labels this year as some of the old ones had begun to deteriorate rapidly and were dangerous.

We had Map Reading Courses on offer this year organised by Andy Young. They were well attended and Berkshire Search & Rescue benefited from our donation of £100 generously contributed to by the attendees on the course. There is a letter of acknowledgement on the publicity table.

It just leaves me to thank the present Committee for all their hard work on our behalf and to thank Pat Menzies who is resigning this year for her contribution to Committee. SE Berks Ramblers are lucky to have such a dedicated team.

Membership report – Colin Bird

- SEBR membership numbers remain stable (since about 2013)

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- October 2016 314
 - September 2017 313
 - New members 30
 - Turnover ~10%
 - Berkshire Area membership shows general downward trend
- Communication with the members is primarily by email and the web-site.
 - We have email addresses for about 85% of the membership
 - About 80 people do not appear to read the emails that we send – though this may be an artefact of MailChimp – our mailing management system.
 - If you do not receive emails for the group please let us know.
 - 6 members for whom we don't have email addresses are posted the walks program and social newsletter 3 times per year. Although because we now have a rolling walks programme, there are many gaps in the posted programme.

Website Report – Douglas Buchanan – Web Manager

The website has continued to be an invaluable tool for the Society and other than a three hour blip one Wednesday morning it has been most reliable. Once again, I would like to thank Brian Jones who manages the walks programme page – an effective way for leaders and potential leaders to enter their walks. Likewise the information is detailed when looking for a walk.

Each month there is an average of 900 unique visitors with a monthly average of over 2200 visits. Because of the increase of traffic we have had to go to a new tariff and that is costing us £30 per annum.

Social Report – Douglas Buchanan – Social Secretary

The year began with lunches at The Bull which was well subscribed. Shirley and Brian Poulton led both the Wednesday and Sunday walks and the pub did provide delicious meals.

March was the skittles evening with 45 in attendance at The Greyhound in Eton Wick. With the format I use for an evening of skittles there was a great deal of activity with healthy banter. The pub provided a simple but delicious meal.

I feel that offering various and “different” activities as well as a comprehensive walks’ programme brings the group together. I thought a map reading session would interest a few and Andy Young came forward and volunteered to run the classes. We were only expecting about ten members but it ended up with 26. All who attended felt it was very worthwhile and we could repeat it in the Spring.



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The quiz evening was in May and the numbers attending were the best since I have been hosting it. The champions of the past were toppled and due to one member coming to the fore when the question on Carry On films was the decider.

The beautiful village of Bibury was visited by 48 members in June where we walked in the beautiful countryside of the Cotswolds before having lunch at The Catherine Wheel. If one ordered trout it came fresh from the hatcheries which are only 300 metres away.

The weather was fine for the August tea party and it was good to see so many people attending. There was a change to the catering and this year a cream tea was served and this was well received.

Our second trip of the year was at the beginning of September and that was to Hayling Island where 50 members walked along the disused railway to The Ferryman Pub - not only did it provide good food but their service was excellent.

We still have the Barn Dance at the end of the month and we hope you will support it.

Ramblers have a great deal of competition with local walking groups, U3As, WIs and the like and unless we provide more than a walks' programme we will not be able to maintain our membership and / or gain new members.

Thank you for your support in 2017.

Publicity Officer's Report - Brian Poulton

Achievements

There have been more SEBR articles in the South East Walker this year than for some time. This was something that I wanted to do to keep non-walking members informed of South East Berks activities, both walking and social.

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We have again gained publicity from BBC Radio Berkshire this year with 3 Sunday slots. We remain the station's point of contact for walking issues.

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The weekly Saturday morning walks remain popular. We are seeing average attendances of around 14-16. My thanks go to the volunteer SEBR walk leaders, Roger and Denise Jones, Barry Leach, the 2 Jeffs and Shirley for their continued support throughout the year. Shirley and Denise have been concentrating on the short walk where they accompany a man with a heart condition who has been walking with us for almost 2 years. He is so grateful for the exercise and the social side of our Saturday walks. It always surprises me that the leaders are still finding new paths to walk every



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week. After nearly 2 years we had a great walk last week which led us past some wonderful wood sculptures at Bill Hill. Last month we also had a memorable walk around the Lexicon a couple of days after it opened.

As was the case last year, there have been a number of new members join The Ramblers after starting out on the Saturday walks.

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New stainless steel gate labels have been bought which supersede the old aluminium ones which did not weather too well and became a safety hazard.

Could Do Better

Since the Ascot Retirement Fair ceased to operate a couple of years ago SEBR have not been represented at any events this year.

Countryside Secretary's Report – Richard Mosses

Development continues. At the moment they are busy building to the north and west of Bracknell. The first is to the north of Harvest Rode and south of Forest Road round Cabbage Hill. All this development provides the Council with Section 106 money to improve parks and open spaces, such as Cabbage Hill which is to be designated a SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace). There is already a car park along Forest Road, but it is not yet open. There is talk of providing a link to across the Forest Road to Hazelwood Lane. The other is north of London Road (Binfield) towards the Copid Beech roundabout and there are already consultations Armen Corner development the other side of London Road.

The Crown Lands in Bracknell Forest are in three sections, Swinley Forest (south of Bracknell), Swinley Park (to the south east) and Buttersteep (the other side of Swinley Road). This year there has been tree felling in Buttersteep. In Swinley Park, there is to be a survey to see exactly what is there as it has many areas not planted with pines; also in Swinley Park there are plans for an all ability trail, probably with access from Bagshot Road (A322). In Swinley Forest the tracks are being given time to recover after the pipeline and the felling that there has been in the last couple of years but there has been work on the bike trails, which has mostly been done by volunteers. There have been plans to provide walking trails will include access to some of the Napoleonic redoubts and other points of interest, but there has been no progress on these because of budgetary constraints. I am not sure if we can offer help.

Holiday Organiser's report – Janet Norris

A holiday on the River Dart for 2018 was cancelled due to lack of support.



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Our Malvern Holiday was a great success. We had 20 taking part. Unfortunately the Darts cancelled due to family reasons but fortunately they got a full refund. The weather was kind to us, mainly dry but windy. Our leader, Veronica was a nice lady and was very thorough. Malvern is not for the faint hearted. The town is hilly and stands under the Malvern Hills so the walking was fairly strenuous but Veronica and I planned that we would not go over 8 miles a day and we stuck to that apart from the Tuesday where we did 10 but we managed it.

Unfortunately Malvern is my last holiday organised as Holiday Secretary. The reason being that we are all getting older and I suspect members want a different type of holiday. Also I know that other holidays are being organised within the group which will inevitably mean that my holidays will not get the support as in the past (as with the River Dart).

I shall still liaise with Croydon Ramblers and should they have a shortfall in numbers for their holidays I shall let everyone know. 3 have filled a gap on their Whitby holiday and there may be an opportunity in the Dolomites.

I have enjoyed putting on the holidays over the years and I would like to thank everyone for their support in making these holidays a great success.