

TAUNTON DEANE RAMBLERS

Minutes of the AGM meeting held on Friday 27th November 2020 at 7pm via Zoom

Present:

John Ollerenshaw Chairman, Gill Lee Treasurer, Lynda Kearn Secretary,

Philip Bisatt, Janice Cockett, Joy Williams, Wendy M, Richard S, Colin F, Heather F, Wendy C, Alan C, Mike W, Christine W, Colin A, Andy N, Val N, Richard W, Shirley W, Carol A, Tim K, Ron R, Cath R, Wendy H, Janet F, Hazel P, Jane L, Nigel L, Val B, Jan R, Janet F. (31 attendees in total)

1. Apologies for absence

Robert W, Joyce L, Lynda D, Maureen M, Mike V, Sue C-B, Madeleine U.

2. Chairman's opening remarks

John mentioned the good news that the Ramblers have informed us that from 2nd December we will be able to start walking in groups again but they are recommending numbers being restricted to a maximum of 12 people.

John then told us a tale from the time in 1994 at the beginning of the group when Gerry Trim, an experienced walk leader, led a walk from Horner up to Dunkery Beacon on Exmoor. It was a beautiful sunny autumnal day in October, lovely and clear at the top, and a brilliant walk. At the Horner tearooms afterwards, all the walkers thought it must be repeated as it was such a good walk. This couldn't take place the following year but was advertised for October 1996. 29 walkers took part but the weather forecast was poor and as the walk progressed, the rain came down heavily and the wind got up. Lunch was in acombe where everyone tried to find shelter but the weather was so poor that walkers were given the option to turn back. The majority did so, following the road through Stoke Pero, Webber's Post and back to Horner, but 8 of the group, including John, decided to continue with the walk and they set off to climb up to the ridge. Here there were copious puddles of water and the wind was howling and blowing them over at times but they finally reached the top where John took a photo of the group huddled together by the pile of stones. John showed us a copy of this photo which he had found in the TDR archives and compared it to one taken of Captain Scott and his group at the South Pole taken 84 years earlier!

The group managed to get back down to Horner and sat in the tearoom enjoying a cup of tea, drying out and reflecting that it had probably been worth the effort after all. Grinning and bearing it, keeping a stiff upper lip and pressing on regardless are all British qualities that some of us at least have. Maybe we will have many more such walks in the future in 2021 when some of us are vaccinated and we can return to normal walking.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on 29 November 2019

The Minutes of the 2019 AGM and all the Reports referred to below have been made available in advance on the Group's website. Voting at the 2020 AGM was done by a show of hands.

The Minutes of the 2019 AGM were agreed. John will sign a copy for the records.

4. Matters Arising

In last year's annual report it was noted that shorter walks were gaining in popularity. Mike Whitmore has recently suggested that Friday evening walks should be replaced by short walks on a Friday afternoon and this will be looked into as we get a programme together again.

In the Area Secretary's report Phil had mentioned there was a need for a succession of people to follow the present officers. We recently heard of the death of Carl Earl, the well known and popular Footpath Officer in South Somerset, and so there has had to be a reshuffle and Phil is now the Area Chairman, outranking John.

5. Annual Report

John wanted to add that we are indebted to Wendy Morrison for starting the Zoom meetings which help to keep members happy, cheerful and informed of what is going on. Also thank you to Ron and Cath Russell for showing their invigorating walks which have kept us going and are very nice to see. The Annual report was accepted by all.

6. Treasurer's Report

Gill asked if there were any questions from her report which has been available on the website. No one had any queries. Gill said she is prepared to stand for another year but asked if someone would think about replacing her in the future as this will be her fourth year. She said she would be available to help anyone who offered to take over and she is always happy to show anyone the accounts and how they work.

7. Committee Members' and Postholders' Reports

- **Footpath Secretary**

This is the quietest year that Phil can remember as the County Council has been doing far less than normal on Rights of Way, particularly during lockdown. He is still awaiting action on the Bickenhill issue mentioned in his report and suspects he will hear nothing from the County Council until after New Year.

- **Area Representative**

The 2021 Area AGM has been provisionally scheduled to be held on Zoom in February, according to Government guidance.

- **Membership Secretary**

John gave thanks to Val from the Committee for her report which showed that membership numbers are holding up well.

Val added that since the report was done a month ago, we have had 8 new members but have lost 4, so we now have a total of 256 members. But to have 8 new members at this time is very good.

John commented that this might be due to the fact that TDR were one of the first groups to get walks restarted in August, after the first lockdown.

Phil also commented that he had been telephoned by a non member about a walk seen advertised on the website.

- **Website co-ordinator**

Dave Patten added a chart showing numbers of visits to the TDR website.

- **Sunday walk co-ordinator**

Janice is retiring after 4 years on the Committee and John gave her special thanks as not only has she co-ordinated walks, she has helped people to lead walks. This is one feature of the group which John feels quite strongly about, not everyone is a walk leader but, in many cases, might become one with the right kind of encouragement and this has been very good.

8. Election of Officers and Members of the Committee

Three nominations have been received for members who wish to put themselves forward for Committee member posts. One of these is for the position of Chair and John stated that according to the TDR Constitution, if any Committee member has been in post for more than 3 years and someone else is nominated for that position, the current holder will not seek re-election. John has been Chairman for 9 years.

Val Boswell has been nominated for the post of Chair by Joy Williams and seconded by Eileen Short. John then invited Val to introduce herself to the members and to give a brief resume of her walking and committee experience. Although Val has no previous TDR Committee experience, and despite a warning that it is quite an arduous job and there was more involved than just chairing meetings, it was felt by several members that fresh ideas would be good and Val would receive support from other Committee members while learning 'on the job'.

Val was then elected as Chair by the majority of members present, with 2 votes against.

John congratulated Val and also offered his support.

Gill Lee, Lynda Kearn, Philip Bisatt and Joy Williams have all indicated that they are willing to stand for re-election and John asked for a proposer and seconder to elect them en-bloc. Wendy Morrison proposed them and this was seconded by Wendy Camp. This was carried unanimously and all four were duly re-elected to their posts.

There are two further vacant posts on the Committee following Janice Cockett's resignation and there have been 2 nominations received for these:

Richard Welch was nominated by Janice Cockett and seconded by Colin Flood.

Jane Lewis was nominated by Linda Everton and seconded by Kathy Richardson.

John invited Richard and Jane to introduce themselves, talk about their walking experience and to say why they wish to join the Committee.

Richard and Jane were then elected to the Committee by the majority of members present.

9. Election to fill non-Committee posts

Assistant Programme Secretaries

Mike Whitmore is willing to remain as Friday walks Assistant Programme Secretary

Tim Knowles volunteered to be Sunday short walks Assistant Programme Secretary

Colin Adams volunteered to be Sunday all day walks Assistant Programme Secretary

Richard Welch volunteered to be Wednesday walks Assistant Programme Secretary

Jane Lewis volunteered to be Social Secretary.

John also mentioned that there is also a vacancy for a Publicity officer but no-one offered to fill this role. Joy Williams mentioned that she is happy to leave copies of walk programmes at the Taunton Information Centre if required. This will be discussed by the new Committee.

Since there were not more candidates than positions for the non-Committee posts, a vote was not held.

10. Appointment of Auditor

Gill explained that the accounts have to be audited and sent to Area by October each year, but the previous Auditor was no longer available so Gill has asked Richard Stone to audit the accounts. This was cleared by Area as, although he is a TDR member, he is not a Committee member and he is well qualified and very experienced.

Gill therefore nominated Richard to be the Auditor and this was seconded by Philippa Kearn. Richard was then elected unanimously.

11. Any Other Business

Janice gave thanks on behalf of the group to John for his 9 years as Chairman, umpteen other years in different posts, helping found the group and keeping it going. Also for leading well over 270 walks and for stepping in whenever there have been gaps in the programme. It has been sterling service for a very long sustained period and she doesn't think the group would have survived without him. Janice gave a vote of thanks which was endorsed and applauded by those present.

John replied that he has served 27 years on the Committee and mentioned the creation of the second and third walk books and also the calendars which he was involved in producing and selling. He calculated that he has made over £7000 for the group over those years, making TDR the richest group in Somerset by far! This is not a bad achievement for him to sign out on and he hopes you will think of him in his retirement.

Meeting closed at 7.56pm

Addendum: Section 9. Following the meeting the Website Co-ordinator, Dave Patten, confirmed that he was happy to continue in this role for a further year (there being no other candidates).