

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Taunton Deane Ramblers held on Friday 25th November 2022 at 7pm at the Friends' Meeting House, Taunton.

Present:

Val Boswell Chair, Gill Lee Treasurer, Lynda Kearn Secretary,

Philip Bisatt, Joy Williams, Richard Welch, Shirley W, Tim Knowles, Carol Allen, Andrew Norris, Val Norris, Diana F, Wendy M, Richard S, Tony M, Tim F, Liz H, Mike L, Wendy H, Rod F, Ruth F, Wendy C, Yvonne H, Daphne H, Barbara C, Kathy R, John O, Michael B, (28 attendees in total)

1. Apologies for absence

Alison N, Vicki R, Philippa K, Mike Whitmore, Chris W.

2. Chair's opening remarks

Val welcomed everyone to the meeting and said how good it was to be able to meet up again in person. She mentioned some of the highlights of the past year. These included the trip to the Elan Valley in Wales with the West Somerset Ramblers which was very enjoyable with some excellent walks. There was the Coach trip to Topsham with a boat ride to Exmouth followed by a walk back along the river. This was an excellent day and Val thanked Colin and Heather Flood for organising it. There was also a Quiz walk around Taunton which was also enjoyable, even if there was a problem with an **oak** tree which was actually a **sycamore**!!

Next year it will be our group's turn to host the Somerset Area AGM which will be held on Sunday 12th February 2023 at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall. There will be a short walk in the morning, followed by a picnic lunch in the hall and we will provide tea, coffee and cakes. The AGM starts at 2pm and there will also be a talk.

Val thanked both Richard Welch who is standing down as a Committee member and Walk programme co-ordinator for Wednesday walks, and Phil Bisatt who is standing down as a Committee member and as Footpath Secretary, for all their hard work for Taunton Deane Ramblers.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on 26th November 2021.

The Minutes of the 2021 AGM were agreed by those members present.

4. Matters Arising

John O asked whether the problem of communication between Walk leaders and Walk programme co-ordinators, which Tim Knowles had raised at the last AGM under the heading Sunday Afternoon walks, had been resolved by the Committee. GDPR rules do not allow the Walk co-ordinators direct access to members' email addresses and contact

numbers unless members have given their permission. A discussion about how to resolve this issue then followed.

Gill L said that not everyone wants to be telephoned and asked to lead a walk, the Membership Secretary sends out emails to every member requesting walks.

Wendy M said that when she was setting up the Zoom Coffee mornings for the group during lockdown she gave her email address to be sent out and everyone interested emailed her back with their email address and gave their permission for her to use it to contact them.

Tim Knowles suggested sending out an email to all members asking them to email Walk programme co-ordinators if they are happy to be contacted about leading a walk. Val Norris replied that an email asking for all walk types should go to everyone, those who do not wish to lead at this time can simply ignore it. That caters for Wednesday, Friday and Sunday walkers.

Liz Hembrow, who has been nominated for the role of Wednesday walk programme co-ordinator, asked the question, "how would I be able to contact walk leaders if I was not able to email them?"

Phil B mentioned the importance of face to face contact in encouraging members to lead walks.

Lynda K said that members have to be registered as Walk leaders for our group before leading a walk and permission could be obtained at this point for Walk programme co-ordinators to use their email address. A list of TDR registered walk leaders can be found on the Assemble website and Lynda is happy to print this off.

Tim Knowles also mentioned that with the new website it is not so obvious when there is a gap in the walk programme.

5. Annual Report

This was posted on the TDR website prior to the meeting.

6. Treasurer's Report

This year has felt like "a get back to normal year" at last. Gill mentioned the coach trip which she did not believe we would fill so this was budgeted to break even at three quarters take up. Well, what did she know, we filled it and had a waiting list hence we made a good profit of £100. Gill is sure the Committee would welcome suggestions for next year.

West Deane Waymarkers were purchased at a cost of £235.20 to replace the missing markers put up several years ago by TDR members.

It may have taken a couple of attempts but we successfully purchased OS maps subscription for group use at a cost of £108 for one year. We now have a growing number of walk leaders who use the app and are posting their walks for other users to follow.

There was a short discussion about how to use the app and whether further training could be made available for newer users.

We are now again receiving holiday donations from RHW Travel Ltd. Many thanks to the members who holiday with the company and nominate TDR.

This year there were also collections for three retiring Committee members which appear in the accounts.

Gill says she submits a budget to Head Office each year and has been asking for the minimum amount since Covid. The funding is received via the Somerset Area. It works out at £1.37 per member this year.

Gill would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard Stone for once again auditing the accounts. Thank you very much and if she is still here as your Treasurer in 2022/23 would he be prepared to do it again (with the members' agreement of course!)
A full report was posted on the TDR website prior to the meeting.

7. Committee Members' and Postholders' Reports

The following reports were posted on the website prior to the meeting.

- **Membership Secretary**

The membership report shows that our numbers are holding steady at 260 members. Val N. said that since producing the report we have had four more new members which is very encouraging.

- **Footpath Secretary**

Phil B said that he had received details of a proposal for a new solar farm at Creech St Michael in the last few days. The solar farm at Preston Bowyer mentioned in his report is not a good proposal, it would obstruct the route of two footpaths and the Landscape Developer did not approve of it. John O clarified with Phil where the proposed site is: it will cover 80 acres. Phil has submitted an objection and hopes it will not be permitted.

Phil mentioned an obstructed footpath at Knapp where the owner is proposing to divert the footpath but is awaiting planning permission for buildings so the path is still obstructed.

The Ramblers are not consulted automatically over Rights of Way issues and Phil has raised this with Kate Ashworth from Ramblers but it would have to be addressed by change of legislation which is a national issue.

The Longforth Farm footpath in Wellington that crosses the railway line is unlikely to be reopened as it is too dangerous and a footbridge is too expensive. Diana F also mentioned a blocked footpath at Sylvan Way, Jurston (behind Waitrose) in Wellington which Phil noted.

Phil also mentioned the blocked bridleway at Bickenhall which he discussed in his report.

The A358 dualling proposals are still moving forward through the statutory process but Ramblers will continue to object to what is being proposed, where footpaths are being cut in half by what is effectively a motorway and no bridges or underpasses are being provided. This will force walkers onto roads and Yvonne H commented that having to walk on narrow lanes can be dangerous when footpaths no longer exist as has happened south of Taunton where the M5 cut off footpaths. Rebecca Pow the local MP has an environmental role in government so maybe she should be contacted about our concerns. Phil mentioned that the roundabout at Ilminster is also an issue and this falls in the South Somerset area so letters should come from Area.

Phil said that he is standing down as Footpath Secretary and as a Committee member at this meeting. He has Ramblers' equipment used for footpath clearance stored in his flat and in his parents' garage which he needs to move. Gill said that the Committee will look at storage needs and maybe rent somewhere if necessary and asked anyone who has equipment stored to notify one of the Committee.

Phil said that he is happy to help someone new to transition to the role of Footpath Secretary.

Tim F thanked Phil for his hard work with the issue at Bickenhall and the Ramblers Area. He also mentioned that the land owners responsible for this issue had bought more land and had now caused problems with footpath T2/8, also in Bickenhall. They have put in a series of really difficult stiles and electric fences along the route which used to be one of the easier walks in the Parish.

8. Election of Officers and Members of the Committee

Phil Bisatt and Richard Welch have indicated that they do not wish to stand for re-election to the Committee. Jane Lewis had previously resigned her post as Social Secretary.

No nominations have been received for members who wish to put themselves forward for Committee member posts. The other four Committee members have all agreed that they are happy to stand for re-election. Tim K proposed that these four existing Committee members are elected en bloc and Shirley W seconded this. A vote was then taken by the members present and the proposal was carried by a majority. Carol Allen then indicated that she was willing to stand as a Committee member. She was proposed by Wendy C and seconded by Shirley W and a vote was taken by the members present which was carried by a majority.

Chair	Val Boswell
Secretary	Lynda Kearn
Treasurer	Gill Lee
Committee member 1	Joy Williams
Committee member 2	Carol Allen
Committee member 3	Vacant
Committee member 4	Vacant

9. Election to fill non-Committee posts

One nomination has been received for the post of Wednesday walk programme co-ordinator. Liz Hembrow was proposed by Richard W and seconded by Shirley W. and this was voted on and carried by a majority. No other nominations have been received and the postholders have all indicated that they are happy to stand for re-election except for Phil Bisatt. These post holders were therefore re-elected en bloc but the role of Footpath Secretary remains vacant.

Footpath Secretary	Vacant
Membership Secretary	Val Norris
Website Co-ordinator	Andy Norris
Programme Secretary	Joy Williams
Assistant Programme Secretaries:	
Short Sunday	Tim Knowles
All day Sunday	Carol Allen
Wednesday	Liz Hembrow
Friday	Mike Whitmore

10. Appointment of Accounts Examiner

Gill asked Richard Stone if he was happy to continue in this role for another year and he agreed.

Date of next AGM: Friday 24th November 2023.

Meeting closed at 20.30h