

Minutes of the Somerset Area Council meeting held on the 19th January 2019

Members Present

Les Stather	Chair
Phil Bisatt	Secretary
Robin Downton	Treasurer
Maggie Thompson	Woodspring
Gerald Swayne	West Somerset
Mavis Monahan	Somerset Rambler Editor
Carl Earl	Area Footpath Secretary

Apologies

Reg Young	Woodspring
Ed Levy	Sedgemoor

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th June 2018

The minutes were approved.

Matters Arising

Complaints procedure – it was noted that this had not yet been sent out as agreed. The Chair agreed to circulate this.

Additional costs arising from the Area newsletter – there was some discussion about this. It was noted that costs overall have reduced, as Area no longer prints the newsletter and posts to all members – instead, ‘Somerset Rambler’ is included with Group newsletters.

Les Stather clarified that former SYWG members are now included in Membership Group 96 (Area). In response to Carl Earl, Les agreed to e-mail these people to point out that they have the option of joining a local Group.

Robin Downton asked what had happened to the SYWG finances, as they had not been transferred to Area. Les advised Robin to contact Head Office about this.

Area AGM

There had been an e-mail exchange between David Thompson and Les/Phil/Robin regarding the presence of a national representative from Ramblers. The representative was to be Peter Carr.

Les Stather felt that it was important to have someone from Head Office so that members could hear what Ramblers are doing at national level to address issues, such as the overall decline in membership, actions agreed at the 2018 General Council, etc. Les felt that there should be a national objective of encouraging people to join Ramblers to support its charitable objectives.

There was a discussion about how effective Ramblers was at raising its profile in the media. Maggie Thompson said that many people do not know the amount of work that Ramblers does to keep footpaths open. She said that the TV programme 'Inside Out West' (BBC) is always looking for items, and she agreed to contact them programme.

Robin Downton suggested that Areas and Groups needed an active publicity officer.

Les Stather said that Ramblers needed a media strategy. At the moment, we don't know what it is. Carl Earl agreed that action was needed at national level. Action is also needed locally, e.g. sending out press releases. Blue Anchor had received a lot of publicity and Carl complemented West Somerset Group for their role.

Les Stather suggested that, to fit in with the agreed AGM programme, Peter Carr be asked to give a short presentation with an opportunity for discussion, after the tea and cakes. He agreed to e-mail Peter to indicate the issues we would like him to cover. For example, we would like discussion on a media strategy, rather than (for example) a new membership system.

On a rotational basis, it would be turn of Mendip Group to host the 2020 AGM.

General Council

The 2019 General Council was in Manchester on 13/14 April. Les Stather was not available that weekend. Phil Bisatt said that he could attend, and Maggie Thompson was provisionally also interested. It was therefore agreed that Phil and Maggie would be the two Somerset delegates.

Treasurer's Report

Robin Downton advised that Ramblers are encouraging electronic payments, to avoid bank charges that are now being levied for processing cheques.

48 people as at 19th January had signed up for the Area Holiday in Sidmouth.

There was a surplus of £1,500 in the self-funding account.

Carl Earl asked why there appeared to be a surplus of £10,831 yet only £4,686 in the balance. Robin Downton explained that this difference was accounted for by payments for the Area Holiday.

Robin advised Carl that we had over £1,000 that could potentially be used to fund any projects. There was then a discussion as to what projects we might like to put forward. It was agreed that a good way to use the money would be to offer part-funding towards the cost of re-opening closed paths, particularly where this involved bridges. Carl Earl agreed to look at SCC's closed footpaths on the web, and then ask Groups what their priorities would be in terms of re-opening.

A 'Donate a Gate' scheme has been running on the Isle of Wight for many years. This is rather like benches that are named in memory of a person. It was agreed that Les Stather and Carl Earl would raise the idea of doing something similar with Peter Hobley at SCC.

Reports from Area Officers and Group Representatives

Footpath Secretary's Report

Blue Anchor – it was hoped that, having been instructed by the Secretary of State to act, SCC would now take steps to get the path open by the end of the year. However, it probably wouldn't be recorded on the definitive map before 2021.

Winsham – Carl Earl had met with the landowner. It was agreed that Carl should discuss the making of an objection with Head Office.

Longstanding objectives – Carl Earl to make contact with Peter Hobley and liaise with Les Stather.

SCC classification of Rights of Way – it was noted that SCC had written to parishes. Speculation as to how many parishes will have acted on the County Council's letter. Some parishes appear not to know what their role is in relation to RoW; some have not heard of the Interactive Map. It was felt that SCC needed to 'sell' parishes' role to them. It was felt that parishes tend to classify '1' as their regular 'dog walking' routes. Classification 3 – there will be an issue of circular walking routes that cross parish boundaries.

Carl Earl pointed out that parish councils have permissive powers to spend money on RoW. Robin Downton felt that individual members of Ramblers need to lobby their parish councils.

Membership

Noted that Somerset had been following the national trend in terms of gradually declining membership. Within the County, the largest decline in members had been in South Somerset; however, some Groups had seen a small increase in members.

Group Reports

These had been received and circulated. Main points of discussions:

Mendip – are creating a 13-mile route from Frome to Bath, potentially to be called ‘The Saxon Kings’ Way’. It would link the Mendip Way to the Cotswold Way, and would be added to the list of Ramblers Routes. Liaison was taking place with Avon area. There was potential for good publicity, e.g. putting in gates.

Gerald Swayne said that West Somerset had probably 60 active walkers out of a membership of 200 – a reflection of the large proportion of retired members.

Finding enough walk leaders is an issue in Mendip and Taunton Deane Groups.

Any Other Business

There was a discussion as to what the priorities of Area should be. These were seen as Rights of Way, getting funding, the Area Holiday and Publicity. Carl Earl mentioned the availability of money for ‘pothole repairs’.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be on Saturday 15th June 2019.

The Meeting closed at 1201.

Action	By
Circulate Complaints Procedure to Area Council members	LS
E-mail Membership Group 96 to advise them that they have the option of joining a local Group	LS
Contact Head Office about former SYWG funds	RD
Contact BBC ‘Inside Out West’	MT
Contact Peter Carr at Head Office re content of AGM presentation	LS
Contact Peter Hobley re ‘Donate A Gate’ scheme	LS/CE
Ask Groups what their priorities are for footpath re-opening	CE
Lobby parish councils about their footpath role	All members

Philip Bisatt
Area Secretary

Woodspring Ramblers Report January 2019.

A relatively quiet period except for the Christmas festivities. Our annual pre-Christmas walk over the Mendips from Priddy was changed this year because we, as a group, had really outgrown the availability of the Queen Victoria. We were getting well over 30 members trying to have a meal in what is a very nice pub but, unfortunately, is a little too small for such a large group. We changed our venue, walk and the date from a Sunday to Thursday. We started from The Burrington Inn at Burrington with Nina and Janice providing a lovely 5 mile walk in the area. The group returned to the Burrington for a very nice lunch. There were still about 30 members so changing everything did not affect the group numbers attending. What was good was the Inn was able to cope with the large group as well as another group at the same time. We will discuss this venue again but, at the moment, we are not sure if the Burrington will be available next year as it has been taken over by the Yeo Valley group.

The group also enjoyed the annual post-Christmas walk around Wavering Down with mince pies and mulled wine during the walk. Our walk leader nearly always manages to get good weather for the stop for the food and drink even though we have sometimes had rain and snow just prior to it. Probably something to do with Robin being an ex Met. man.

The footpath maintenance team continue at full strength with the installation of many kissing gates, ped. gates and repair of footbridges in the North Somerset area. At one point a small number of the team had to become herders to remove a herd of cattle along the footpath where they were to install new gates. It makes a change from the cattle eating a car as happened a few years ago.

Planning for our 2019 holidays are well underway. We will be going to St. Ives in March. We then have a weekend holiday in the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh. An interesting venue but we have received some excellent reviews. Our annual week-long holiday will be in the Lake District, based in Windermere. After such a successful holiday in Austria last year we are looking at a return trip to Austria (but a different area) in 2020.

Membership has risen to 203 from our 200 or just below. It doesn't sound a great increase but it is pleasing to know that new members are joining and walking with some of the members that have not actually walked, leaving the group. Not sure how we can entice non-walkers out because some members are happy to support Ramblers without actually taking part.

David Thompson

Chairman,

Woodspring.

Mendip Group

- **Membership**

At the 1st of January our membership is 332 up by 1 from this time last year

- **Working Party Report**

The working party remains very active and worked 48 weeks in 2018 putting in 38 kissing gates, 27 Stratford gates, 16 bridges 46 fingerposts 76 path clearances and 34 stile repairs.

- **Walking Festival**

Mendip Ramblers 2019 walking festival will be at Shepton Mallet 24th to 26th August.

- **Holidays**

Our group holiday this year is in April at Eastbourne. Bob & Rosemaerry Berry are running a self booking holiday walking the Usk Valley way from Newport to Brecon at the end of April and Tony and Jane Dyson are running a self booking holiday at the end of September in St Malo

Taunton Deane Group

Area Report

19th January 2019

The Group aims to continue offering four walks per week - on Wednesday afternoons, Friday evenings and Sundays (all day and half day). Numbers attending have generally been holding up, but it has been a struggle at times to find new walk leaders. Efforts continue, however, and some good ideas for events during 2019 have been coming forward – as the saying goes, watch this space.

The Group's AGM was held on 23rd November at the Friends Meeting House in Bath Place, Taunton, which everyone agreed was a very good venue. Many thanks are due to Dot, Lynda and Judi for the accompanying refreshments.

As a change from the normal Wednesday and Friday walks, Janice and Alan Cockett organised a 'Walls, Wharves and Würstchen' walk in Exeter, which included sections of the Exe, the City Wall, and an opportunity to partake of seasonal fare at the Christmas Market. Despite very dull weather, the afternoon was a lot of fun and was enjoyed by all who took part.

Continuing the seasonal theme, the annual Christmas Meal was held on 14th December at the Allerford Inn, a new venue for this event which was generally well-received. Following the success of the 2018 event, the post-Christmas Lunch was once again held at Somerset County Cricket Club – this year with a grandstand view of the ground from the Long Room.

Val Norris has taken over the role of Membership Secretary from Wendy Camp, who has carried out this important task for nine years. Many thanks to Val for offering to do this, and thanks especially to Wendy for all her efforts.

Philip Bisatt

South Somerset Area Report

Membership has fallen from 263 to 258 as at 1 October 2018.

Roger Cripps, after many years of sterling work, has stepped down as Working Party Organiser.

Our Christmas Lunch was once again held at the Muddled Man, West Chinnock and was attended by 68 members. The team at the pub produced an excellent meal, enjoyed by all. The walk beforehand was organised by Daphne Denny in the local area.

The Friends of Ham Hill have produced a set of four circular walks on Ham Hill, ranging from a one mile all-ability trail to a longer more challenging walk of over five miles covering the whole of the site. They have been compiled by John Day, a Volunteer Ranger at Ham Hill Country Park and a member of the South Somerset Ramblers Group. The South Somerset Ramblers provided some of the funding. A launch day to promote the leaflets was held on 4 August when around 40 people of all ages were led on Walk 3 by John.

A successful Saga group walking holiday was organised by John Oliver to Denia on the Costa Blanca with 11 South Somerset Ramblers and has organised another walking holiday to Minorca in April 2019.

Our summer supper was held in July at the Lamb and Lark, Limington organised by Ruth Goodland. 45 people attended a well presented meal. Les Stephens lead an interesting walk around Yeovilton beforehand.

The Group AGM was held on Saturday 4 November at East Coker Village Hall. Derek Lucas led a walk beforehand and members provided a wide variety of cakes afterwards.

All South Somerset walks now appear on the Walk Finder.

West Somerset Group - January 2019

The West Somerset Group continues with the usual two and sometimes three walks per week with the exception that following last years 40th Celebrations we intend to repeat members favourite walks and a Tea Party at Allerford during 2019.

As reported at the last meeting we have a walking weekend 29 - 31 March at Brecon with HF Holidays and 30 members have now booked. There has been very little interest for a weekend in Derbyshire for March 2020 so this may be changed.

The spring coach outing will be to Woolacombe / Ilfracombe area in May and the autumn coach trip will finish at the National Trust Killerton House..

We are hoping for a resolution of the closed Blue Anchor Bay footpath this year. The Somerset County Council has until the 2 October 2019 to determine the application.

Gerald Swayne

Chairman West Somerset Group

Sedgemoor & Area Report January 2019

The group's AGM took place at the end of October at a new venue of Berrow Village Hall which was considered to be a more central point for most of the group's members. All serving committee members had agreed to stand again for the new year and were re-elected.

During the October – December period our walking programme has continued weekly and our footpath working party has also continued with its work. Another set of footpath surveys has been completed for Somerset County Council and training for the task has been arranged with a Rights of Way officer.

The Christmas meal took place at Enmore Golf Club and was well attended. The Christmas Mince Pie and Bubbly walk took place on 23rd December. It was not as well attended as in past years possibly because of its very close proximity to Christmas.

In addition to our usual weekly walks our plans for 2019 include an away day walk in Plymouth. We are teaming up with Stowey Walking to lead two walks in there walking festival in the weekend of Saturday and Sunday 23rd and 24th June. Holidays will take place in the Peak District in May, the Isle of Man in June and Eastbourne in September. Plans are afoot for the summer outing to Swanage in Dorset in late June and our annual summer lunch will take place in July.

Edward Levy

02/01/19

Area Treasurer Report January 2019

Annual Returns 2017/18

Area accounts (copy attached) for the year ending 30th September 2018 has been signed off by the Area's Independent Examiner. The statement to be presented at the Area AGM on 17th February 2019.

Groups and Area Annual returns have been sent to the Finance Office at Ramblers HQ.

Bank Charges

A 30p charge for each cheque deposited came into effect from 5th September. There is also a 50p (per £100) for the depositing of cash.

To avoid these charges members are encouraged to make payments into Group and Area account via Bank Transfer.

Area Holiday Sidmouth

Deposits and one full payment for the Sidmouth W/E currently £1610.00

Account balance (31st December 2018) £4686.18

Main £1384.98 Self-funded £3301.20.

Robin Downton

Somerset Area Treasurer

**RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION SOMERSET AREA
ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2018**

	2017/18	2016/17
INCOME	£	£
Funding From Central Office	1000.00	3500.00
Grants (Walk About Fund)	975.00	0.00
Donations	0.00	0.00
Area Holiday	16350.00	11450.10
Publications/Goods Sales	21.90	14.70
Other		7.50
Total	£18,346.90	£ 14,972.30
EXPENDITURE		
To Groups-Budget Funding	3279.00	2832.50
To Group (other)	0.00	0.00
Walk About Fund	423.75	0.00
Newsletter (Postage, Stationery & Printing)	225.15	123.04
Campaigns/casework	0.00	33.60
Practical Work	0.00	0.00
Meetings(inc AGM)	385.04	271.58
Contribution To Production of Wessex Wanderer	50.00	200.00
Area Holidays	3124.01	10335.25
Other	28.00	35.50
Total	£7,514.95	£13,831.47
Surplus/Deficit	£10,831.95	£1,140.83
Balance in Hand 30/9/17		7361.37
Assets		0.00
Current Account		£18,193.32
Deduct outstanding payments		0.00
Income + balance brought forward from 30/9/17		25708.27
Expenditure		7514.95
Balance		£18,193.32

I certify that the above accounts have been prepared in accordance with Ramblers Association guidelines, that they reflect accurately the transactions of the Area during the financial year, show the state of affairs as at 30th September 2018, that the above records have been properly kept and all payments authorised by the committee.

Signed: R.A. Daemke Date: 7-11-18

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area independent examination guidelines I consider that the Somerset Area accounts to 30th September 2018 have been properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the Area's finances for the year to 30th September 2018

Signed: [Signature] Date: 8/12/18
Independent Examiner

Report of Area Footpath Secretary – January 2019

- **Claim for path at Blue Anchor** – as 12 months have elapsed since the claim was accepted by SCC, but they have refused to prioritise the application, West Somerset, with guidance from Head Office, applied to the Secretary of State to require the County Council to process the application. The claim was made on the basis of safety (the definitive line and the new Coastal Path both require walking below the high tide line) and the large number (over 120) supporting statements from the public. The Secretary of State agreed our request and the County must now deal with the application this year.
- **Changes to the definitive map** – we continue to receive consultations on changes to RoW which are sent to the relevant Group FPS for consideration. This provides the opportunity, if we do not object to the proposal outright (which may result in the application being withdrawn), to suggest alternatives which the highway authority can put to the applicant. One recent consultation on a bridleway in Winsham, South Somerset may result in the Order, if it is made, being objected to by us and going to PINS for determination. The proposal would remove the bridleway from an attractive valley onto an entirely different route for half its length. The route is very historic and after consultation with the group FPS we would recommend the Ramblers object if the Order proceeds. I will give further details at the meeting and seek approval for action.
- **Cropping of Paths** – If a cross-field Right of Way is found to be cropped it is important to report it to the Highway Authority (Somerset County of North Somerset). Walk leaders are especially asked to report any cropping to the relevant Footpath Secretary or directly on-line in the case of Somerset paths. The previous provision to report it to the Rural Payments Agency under EU rules will, of course, lapse. Ramblers is hoping that the replacement agricultural grants scheme will provide similar opportunity to report such obstructions, but we await details of the new arrangements.
- **A303/A358 Dualling** – we have been consulted over the detailed route of the section between Sparkford and Podimore and been able to agree alterations to the RoW that will provide convenient and safe crossings of the new road. Details of the final scheme were due last month, but have not yet appeared. We have been assured that we will be consulted before the work proceeds. The detailed proposal for the widening of the A358 has been delayed, but as soon as the outline scheme is announced the two relevant Group FPSs will be consulted to ensure that safe crossings of the new road are provided.
- **Long Standing Obstructions** – Little action appears to have taken place on the key obstructions that we have identified to Somerset CC. I would welcome suggestions on how we could proceed. Not all would be capable of a Section 130 Order as they are obstructed by buildings. The Chair and I could ask for a formal meeting with SCC and/or local Ramblers members could raise the issues with their local County Councillor to put pressure on. The routes identified are seen as key in the network.
- **SCC Classification of RoW** – The County Council has contacted all Parish Council to ask them to check the classification of all RoW in their Parish. The CC previously classified all RoW about 10 years ago and wants to up-date these. The Area Chair has tried to ensure that Ramblers point of view on the classification is also taken account of. Les can give further details at the meeting.

Carl Earl

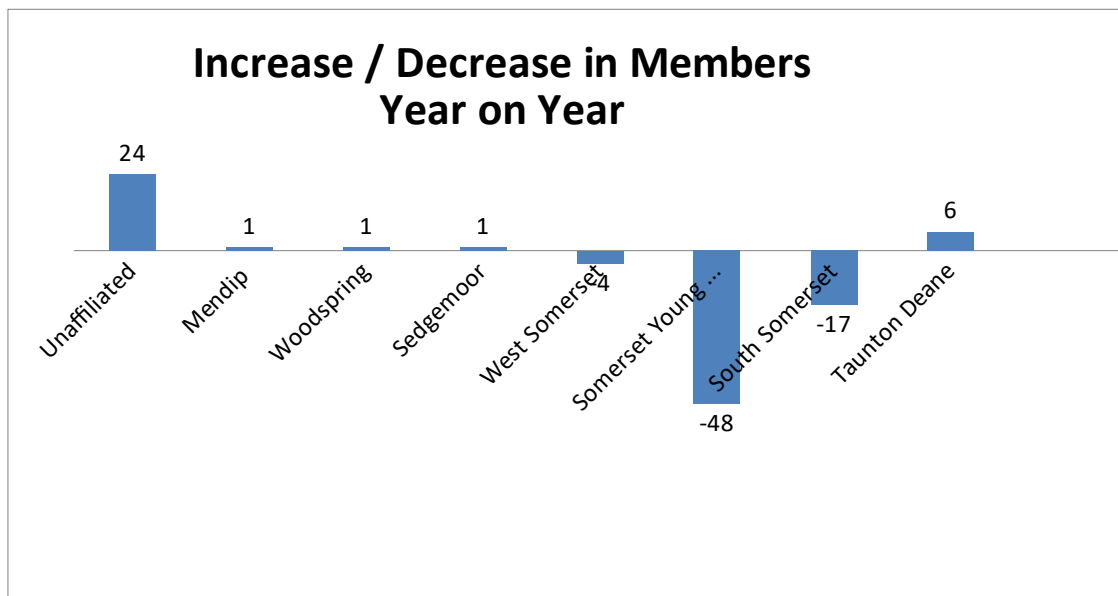
Area Footpath Secretary

January 01 2019

Ramblers Membership 102,312

Down 2% from Last year

Area Membership down 2% on last year



Somerset Young Walkers folded and numbers moved to Unaffiliated

