

THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION
Greater Manchester and High Peak Area

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held at the Friends Meeting House
Manchester, on Saturday 19 March 2016

Present: 42 members signed the attendance book.

Weekend Walkers	10
M AD Walkers	2
Rochdale	2
Trafford	3
Area	3
Stockport	2
Manchester & Salford	16
Bolton	1
Wednesday Walkers	3

Before opening the meeting, the Chair, Salle Dare, asked members to observe one minute's silence for RA members who had recently died: Dave Barcroft, Doreen Wilcox, Colin Weever, and Alan Pollock.

1. Apologies were received from Judy Walker, Jean Thompson, Maggie Smith, Margaret Squires, Gordon Campbell, Stewart Ramsden, Joyce Tyldesley and Debbie Abrahams.

2. Chairman's Opening Remarks: Salle Dare said that it had been an interesting year and that there were difficult times ahead owing to Government cuts. She welcomed Des Garrahan, Chair of the Ramblers' Board of Trustees, to the meeting.

3. Keynote Address: Des Garrahan, Chair of the Ramblers' Board of Trustees:

- Des thanked members for inviting him and passed on greetings from Kate Ashbrook. He said this was his first Manchester AGM, although his 84th in the Association. He had enjoyed the walk prior to the meeting, led by Mags Metcalf, and he thanked her for this. He also thanked those members who had organised the teas and coffees.
- He welcomed the fact that the RA was still going strong after 80 years in existence, following becoming an Association in 1935. It has over 108,000 members, and 25000 of these are volunteers, passionate about the work they are doing for the Association. At Group level, there are often more women than men, but women do not generally participate in Area meetings, so consequently there are fewer women on the Board. Ramblers Holidays is a major contributor to the RA.
- Turning to walking, Des said that a number of members had joined in the last 2 years as a result of following Ramblers Routes and finding that they loved walking and the consequent improvement in their health. They had not joined for campaigning reasons. Des said that when he talked to MPs, MEPs etc. it was health, not rights of way, which they wanted to discuss. The problem was that local authority funding cuts were affecting the funding for Health Walks, and Transport for Greater Manchester had completely cut the funding for their officer responsible for developing Greater Manchester's walking strategy.
- Des then turned to the Big Pathwatch and asked for members' views. Edgar Ernstbrunner said that the Area had not used RACO's system as there were serious

flaws in it. Using grid squares was confusing, as some paths covered more than one square, so the Area had surveyed each path. Also the Explorer map was out of date in many places so the definitive map had been used. Des took issue with Edgar, saying his was a minority view and that most Areas, as well as organisations such as the National Trust, the Long Distance Walkers, and the YHA, had been very complimentary. The project overall had attracted quite a lot of media coverage. Salle Dare said that one benefit of Pathwatch was that many people outside the RA had taken part, and that we should follow this up, with the aim of recruiting new members. Des maintained that the data produced had been worthwhile and that the project would be relaunched in 2 to 3 weeks. The Ramblers would engage in deep conversation with local authorities about what they could do, with Ramblers help, about the problems the data had revealed.

- On the question of Governance, Des referred to the Mission and also to the Public Benefit Statement, which showed that the RA was more than a membership organisation. The Board was addressing the issue of Governance over 3 years (now 2 years) and the issue would be debated at the 2016 General Council (GC), when indicative approval would be sought. The 2017 GC would focus on Areas and Groups and the 2018 GC on the Board of Trustees. Des said that in his conversations with members, the need for Areas had constantly been questioned; Des said however, that Areas would remain.
- Questions were put and comments made. John Ireland said that there was a heavy bias towards male attendees at GC and that voting delegates were even more biased towards males. He asked Des what could be done about this. Des said there were no powers at present to limit delegates as regards gender.
- Richard Gibbons said that a healthy lifestyle was currently high on the Government's agenda and he suggested this factor could be used to attract younger members to the RA. Des said that this matter was constantly being addressed, but the trouble was that these members often did not stay after the first year. People tended to join when they got older. John Ireland pointed out however that the 2 Groups focussing on younger people in the Greater Manchester Area – the Manchester & District Walkers and the Weekend Walkers – were very successful.

4. Presidential Address:

There was no Presidential Address as Debbie Abrahams had unfortunately been unable to attend the meeting.

5. Minutes of the AGM held on 21 March 2015:

Edgar Ernstbrunner proposed and Gavin Poulton seconded that these be accepted as a correct record and this was agreed unanimously.

6. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

7. Annual Report:

- Salle Dare thanked Mags Metcalf for typing up the Annual Report.
- Salle said that liaison between the RA and the local authorities was now difficult owing to the cut in funding resulting in the loss of Transport for Greater Manchester's officer for developing Greater Manchester's Walking Strategy.
- Salle said that part of the Salford Trail had unfortunately been lost to floods and the Environment Agency would not be replacing it.

- Edgar Ernstbrunner reported that a complaint had been made to RACO from a new walker on a Group walk in the Area. This walker had been a bit slow and felt that the other walkers were hostile towards her. Salle said that members should always be welcoming to new walkers and discuss any problems amicably with them. Walkers should always stay behind the leader and a back marker should be appointed. Perhaps a walk more suitable to the new walker's abilities could be suggested.
- Salle Dare said that it had been suggested that Area committee meetings should be reduced to 4 meetings p.a. plus the AGM. It was pointed out that this required a modification of the Standing Orders which needed a two-thirds majority in a vote. Salle moved a motion, which was seconded by John Ireland :
 "This AGM approves that a motion to move to 4 Area Executive Committee (EC) meetings p.a. plus the AGM should go to the next Area meeting." The motion was passed overwhelmingly with 1 abstention. John Ireland would draft revised standing orders for the next EC meeting.

7. Presentation of Accounts:

- Area Treasurer Mike Lyons reported that the Area had spent more than was coming in in the financial year 2015/2016. This was not a problem as the Area had been running down its reserves by using its own funds for path repairs etc. instead of applying to RACO. The Area still had a substantial amount that could be used for future path problems. The system was that the Area contributed 50% to a local authority for a project – in certain cases a higher contribution could be negotiated. He urged Groups to bring proposals to the Area. Members were also referred to the *Entrust* report on page 18 of the Annual Report, which was another source of funding. SD moved and JI seconded that the Accounts be approved and this was carried unanimously. There were no questions.

8. Examiner's Report:

There were no questions on the Report. Mike Lyons said that Siobhan Cresswell was willing to continue as Examiner. ML proposed and JI seconded that the Report be accepted, and that Siobhan Cresswell be reappointed. This was carried unanimously.

9. Election of Officers and individual members:

President: John Ireland proposed that Debbie Abrahams M.P. should be reappointed. This was seconded by Salle Dare and carried unanimously.

Chair: Margaret Manning had been proposed by Mike Lyons and seconded by Salle Dare. She was elected unanimously and took the Chair.

Vice-Chair: Edgar Ernstbrunner had been proposed by Gloria Gaffney and seconded by Janet Cuff. Salle Dare had been proposed by John Ireland and seconded by Margaret Metcalf. A vote was taken, with 28 votes going to Salle and 7 to Edgar. Salle was elected.

Treasurer: Mike Lyons had been proposed by John Ireland and seconded by Margaret Manning. He was elected unanimously.

General Secretary: John Ireland had been proposed by Salle Dare and seconded by Mags Metcalf. He was elected unanimously.

Membership Secretary: Gavin Poulton had been proposed by John Ireland and seconded by Edgar Ernstbrunner. He was elected unanimously

Minutes Secretary: Janet Cuff had been proposed by John Ireland and seconded by Edgar Ernstbrunner. She was elected unanimously. Janet said that this would be her last year as she would be stepping down at the end of the year.

Footpath Co-ordinator: Edgar Ernstbrunner had been proposed by Sue Daber and seconded by Janet Cuff. He was elected unanimously.

Wednesday Walks Officers: Sue Daber and Gordon Campbell had been proposed by Tricia Hewson and Graham Winstanley, and seconded by Ian Steadman and Lesley Kenworthy. They were elected unanimously.

Elected Member: Gloria Gaffney had been proposed by Edgar Ernstbrunner and seconded by Janet Cuff. She was elected unanimously.

Elected Member: Joyce Tyldesley had been proposed by Alan Kendrick and seconded by Bruce Fairbanks. She was elected unanimously.

John Ireland said that Brian Coxon was willing to continue as Website Administrator, Wendy Olsen as Access Officer, and Jeff Lewis as Sunday Walks Officer. They would be co-opted at the next Area committee meeting.

11. Appointment of Examiner: see Item 8.

12. Motions for Debate:

The following motion was proposed by Gavin Poulton and seconded by Andy Barclay:

“General Council asks the Board of Trustees to include on membership cards a barcode representing the member’s text already present as a low or no cost addition to allow innovative future uses, such as register-taking or fitness tracking.”

Salle Dare said that it had already been passed by the EC and submitted as the Area motion to ‘General Council. Should the motion be rejected by the AGM, it would be withdrawn.

- Gavin addressed the meeting. He said that the location of the barcode would be at the bottom left hand corner of the membership card.
- He said that there was little time to write down walkers’ details at the start of a walk and that the barcode was a solution...
- He said that it inspires confidence if walkers know that the leader knows who is in the group.
- He said we all benefit from Ramblers insurance if the leader knows who is in the group, and leaders will be protected against a claim if they have the details of participants. Walkers without a card should be registered manually
- The system would be introduced in a year’s time. Groups could decide at their AGMs whether or not to take up the option of implementing the system.
- In answer to a query from Janet Cuff about “fitness tracking” Gavin said that if, for example, a walker wanted to know if his fitness was improving, the fact that he did the walk would be registered, and he could perhaps be sent a congratulatory email saying that he/she did well.
- Cath Fernley thought it was a brilliant idea but was concerned that if we stay with the same process of issuing cards, walkers could benefit from the advantages even if they hadn’t paid.
- Edgar Ernstbrunner raised the question of privacy. Gavin said that a security system would be in place – the user would have to enter a password. The app wouldn’t log in - it would only check the name and expiry date.
- Des Garrahan said that the Board were very supportive.

A vote was taken, and the motion was passed overwhelmingly, with 3 voting against, and 2 abstentions.

13. Any other Business:

- 1 member was going to the National Members' Day in York.
- Salle Dare said that 14 May was Volunteers' Day to be held at the Friends Meeting House in Manchester.

14. Closing Remarks: Margaret Manning thanked members for an orderly meeting and also thanked Salle Dare for her time as Chair.

Janet Cuff 23 March 2016