



RAMBLERS

South Cheshire

SCR Annual General Meeting

30 October 2023

Minutes of Meeting

Attendees:

Chris Ashton, Alison Belcher, Chris Bishop, Bev Brady, Wendy Broad, Kevin Bush, Eileen Dorman, Lynn Dudley, Jim Eckersley, Alan Edwards, Jenny Edwards, Phil Guest, Mags Grindod, Nigel Hallam, Helen Lea, Dave Lewis, Kathryn Lewis, Alan Lowe, Ann Lowe, Trevor Park, John Roberts, Sheila Shaw, Judith Spowage, Hazel Wallis,

Apologies:

Elizabeth Bull, Ann Bush, Barry Comerford, Pauline Hallam, Anne Holroyd, Jan Tearle, Maggie Thomason

Chairman's Address – Trevor Park

Trevor welcomed all to the meeting. In particular he welcomed 4 new participants to SCR – Dave & Kathryn Lewis and Alan & Ann Lowe – all of whom have experience of Ramblers elsewhere for many years but are now joining us in SCR.

He then presented his overview of the past year, the high points – our comprehensive and diverse walks programme, group holidays, enhanced communications – and the others – particularly the cancellation of the 30th anniversary event. He stressed the need for a social secretary, and for more leaders to be involved in the running of the group.

A copy of his report is attached.

Reports from Officers / Activities

Walk Programme – Phil Guest

Phil commented on the much more robust condition of our walks programme over the past year, with SCR walks now back to pre-Covid numbers. He welcomed a modest increase in the number of new walk leaders and the arrival / return of leaders following surgery / treatment. Following the very successful Walk Leaders meeting of September, the next walks planning meeting is scheduled for November 15th, at the Swan Inn in Wybunbury.

A copy of Phil's report is attached.

An analysis of SCR's 2023 walks to date – and an estimate of our results by year end – was presented by Kevin Bush. It shows that we should reach a total of about 115 walks this year, leading about 1200 walkers in that time. While the number of walks offered matches that of SCR pre-Covid, the number of participants on our walks is down some 20% (from 1600) in 2019. It's likely that about 40-50 individual SCR members make up the vast majority of our walkers.

A copy of the analysis is attached.

Our new members – Kathryn & Dave and Ann and Alan – were asked about their experiences elsewhere in the Ramblers. In the main, SCR was felt to be very like other RA branches, and offers a wide variety of diverse walks. Active walkers are a minority of overall membership in each group - ie most RA members don't walk regularly.

Membership Secretary – Hazel Wallis

Hazel presented an overview and then a breakdown of our current membership, now about 210, with 32 new members having joined in the last year. It is not known whether such a growth in membership is common with other RA groups.

One of Hazel's concerns reflect this growth – while 32 have recently joined SCR, only a few of these have been seen on walks. We don't really understand what and why this is the case, and this was one of the driving reasons for the recent SCR member's Survey, which will be covered later.

Hazel's report is attached.

Website & Technology – Jim Eckersley

Jim gave an overview of the significant work underway to update our website and associated technology. The coding for our website is being upgraded (by Ramblers Web, with a move to Joomla 4). Once the work and subsequent testing is completed, we will commence the changeover (which should be seamless to users). Further upgrades to area walks and walk registration are also being introduced – one feature of this is that everyone submitting a walk will soon begin to receive confirmation that their walk has been added.

A copy of Jim's report is attached.

Treasury – Chris Ashton

Chris gave a summary of SCR's finances (which had been audited by Paul Boniface). The finances show a vibrant group living comfortably within its means, even with the losses incurred due to the cancellation of the 30th Anniversary Event.

A copy of Chris's report is attached.

Footpaths – Nigel Hallam

Nigel discussed the (relatively low) degree of activity we have in this area relative to some other groups (that get involved much more in path maintenance and even repair). There was also some discussion about the differences in responsiveness between active local councils – Cheshire East, Shropshire – and Cheshire West.

Nigel finally commented that the Committee (and subsequently members) would need to consider how much they wished to put into footpath and associated upkeep and maintenance in the future.

Secretary – Kevin Bush

Kevin gave a summary of the work conducted in 2023, part of which was archiving and analysing our walks programme (see earlier discussion on this as an example) and a significant upgrading our Group Emailing approach (through using MailChimp). This work brought us up to the standards recommended by Ramblers Association, and gave us colourful, branded and hyper-linked emails and newsletters. He also showed us the recently introduced emails that are now being sent, through MailChimp, under Hazel's name, to all new members.

A copy of Kevin's report is attached.

Rambler's Association Developments

Most visible to members will be the improvements to Walks Manager, with the transition from GWEM complete – the system looks better, is quicker and passes through to our local site more cleanly.

Trevor stated that there will be an Extraordinary Meeting of RA on 25th November. This will be a single-item meeting, to discuss the refreshing of the Strategic Direction of RA. Papers on the meeting are due out within days and members will be further informed.

Cheshire East Area Ramblers (of which we are part) will have its AGM in Macclesfield on 27th November. It is a legal requirement for such a meeting (we are a registered charity) and there will be focus on funding, expenditure, walks and footpaths. Again, further information will come from Trevor.

Member Survey

Kevin summarised the reasons for and the conclusions from the recent SCR survey, part of which was to try to understand further why the majority of our members (and particularly our new members) are not very active and walking with us.

We seem to have a group in which about 20% of members are active walkers, 60% are reactive and interested (they open all the emails sent to them, for example) but do not regularly walk with us, and 20% are inactive or disinterested (don't even open the emails they receive).

The responses to the Survey further confirm this view – about 20% of members completed the Survey, and they are almost all those that are already active in SCR.

The Survey gave us some good insights into why our (active) members walk, with whom, and how often – and most wanted to walk even more with us, subject to some conditionality such as health, busyness, date and time of walks etc. Certainly there seems to be interest in extending the diversity of our walks – shorter as well as longer walks; Saturday and mid-week walks; extending the highly successful evening pub walks throughout the year, holding them in the day time, and possibly coffee-shop rather than just pub-linked; more theming of our walks. These don't necessarily increase the number of walks we offer but round them out – eg some of our weekend or midweek 8-milers could be themed more.

The Walk Leaders will discuss this further at their Nov 15th meeting, as they assemble the Walk Programme for Q1 2024.

While the Survey has provided valuable input into the attitudes of our active members it was not successful in growing any understanding of the attitudes of the 60%-reactive group, why they open all their SCR emails yet don't participate more in SCR. As is common elsewhere, neither email nor surveys are particularly useful in gaining understanding of such individuals' attitudes. Kathryn & Dave and Ann and Alan both commented that they felt our walks programme already showed we were a strong group, were a little bewildered as to the amount of discussion around what else members want (they think we already do very well) and confirmed the active-reactive-disinterested split was similarly found in other RA groups.

Kevin stated that he would be summarising the Survey report and placing it on the website for all to see and for archiving. This would be completed prior to the next Walk Leaders meeting.

Officers Remaining and Standing Down

There were no individuals wishing to stand for election to the Committee and most of the current Officers will remain in position. Trevor announced that Kevin had requested he stand down as secretary (due to his time requirements for other activities) and that Trevor would be searching for a new secretary.

What was clear was that there were many functions that could easily be shared out – an example was in maintaining the Walks Manager system – which would require little time for one individual, rather than having so many activities lying with a small number of Officers. There were requests for the Committee to break down the tasks that need to be completed – eg Group Emailing; Facebook; Walks Management – that need to be undertaken and seek a number of individuals to manage these tasks, rather than just look for a new secretary or social secretary. Trevor will take these proposals further.

Trevor thanked Kevin for the extensive work that he had undertaken over the past year, wished him well, and hoped SCR continue to see Kevin and Ann actively participating within SCR.

AOB

Hazel mentioned the Annual Dinner, which will be held at Cheshire Catering College, in the first half of January. Further details will be circulated soon.

The meeting was finished by 9pm and was followed by refreshments. Our thanks go out to Mags and Hazel for arranging the food.



RAMBLERS

South
Cheshire

AGM Officers Reports

30 October 2023





RAMBLERS

**South
Cheshire**

Annual General Meeting

30th October 2023

Nantwich Museum, Pillory Street, Nantwich

AGENDA

- Apologies
- Chairman's Welcome
- Reports from Officers
 - Walks Programme
 - Membership
 - Footpaths
 - Website / Technology
 - Social Media and Comms
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
- Ramblers Association Developments
 - Websites and Walks Management
 - RA Extraordinary Meeting 25th Nov
 - CER AGM 27th Nov
- Results from recent survey
- Thanks to Officers Standing Down
- Election of Officers and Committee Members
- AOB

South Cheshire Ramblers

AGM 30th October 2023

Chair Report

2023 has seen South Cheshire Ramblers maintain a comprehensive and diverse walks programme. This has been further enhanced by the walk leaders meetings which have been able to generate a complete 3 month walks programme.

This is excellent for both active members who can plan their activities in advance but also helps in promoting our activities externally.

So thank you to all those who support the planning and operation of the walks programme.

Again the walks programme was complimented by the group holidays in Eastbourne, Keswick and Anglesey. Plus the Mangalonga event.

Having established a more robust walks programme we made a concerted effort to reach to SCR members whom we never see.

Here we must note that when a person joins the Ramblers they are allocated to a local branch by post code. As opposed to specifically joining say the South Cheshire Ramblers.

Around 75% of the SCR members never get involved with the group and this is similar in the Rambler groups.

The way we now communicate with members with a more branded image and also including a direct link to the walks programme will help in maintaining inclusivity, whilst at the same time we will respect the members who do not wish to get actively involved with the SCR group.

One area of disappointment was the planned 30th anniversary celebration where considerable effort was put into planning the event. However it was cancelled due to lack of interest.

Moving forward we will take a more circumspect view on the planning of future events and look for more involvement from a broader group of the membership.

Certainly one role we lack is a social secretary who can be the focal point for all members on activities outside the normal walks programme. This can range from an evening meal to a themed walk.

On the theme of volunteers we do need more members to become actively involved in the operational running of the group. There are a number of regular tasks where we do need cover such as loading the walks onto Walks Manager.

Anyone who is interested in getting more involved do please speak to myself or any committee member.

South Cheshire Ramblers

AGM 30th October 2023

Walk Programme

To date in 2023 the number of walks, led by our members, has met the needs for weekend and some midweek dates. The Tuesday evening pub walks again were successful with the numbers attending steadily increasing through the year.

Several of our registered and experienced leaders remain shy, active only on the pub walks but happily a small number have graduated to providing weekend walks as well for which I am very grateful. I want to mention Phil Dyson, who has led for us for the first time and I'm sure will continue to make himself available.

Now that Chris Bishop has been restored, it will be good to have him lead several of his longer walks and I must mention Doug Hill, whose Shropshire walks have been both challenging and enjoyable for those taking part. Anne Holroyd will be out of action shortly and I wish her well and a quick recovery after her hip operation so that she can rejoin our group of regular walk leaders.

The first meeting for some time of walk leaders in August, held in The Swan at Wybunbury, was very positive and filled the Autumn/Winter planner up to almost Christmas. A second meeting this year will again be held at the Swan on Wednesday 15th November when we will try to fill all the weekend and in the week opportunities up to the middle of March. I encourage all leaders, who can attend, to do so, as this is the principal opportunity to 'book your slot'. Any leader who is unable to attend, please let me know in advance of the meeting to reserve your date.

Others tonight will report on the recent survey, the results of which, could change our groups walk programme.

Overall, I believe our leaders have provided a full and interesting programme of walks in 2023 and I hope they will continue throughout next year. We need you all.

Analysis of SCR Walks 2023*

Walks to Date*

98 walks / 1021 Walkers
10.4 walkers per walk

Weekend 8+

36 walks
10.4

Weekend Short

14 walks
9.7

MidWeek 8+

26 walks
8.0

Pub Lunch

5 walks
10.2

Pub Walks

17 walks
15.2

Potential Year End

115 walks / 1200 Walkers
10.3 walkers per walk

* Up to 12 October 2023

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Membership Secretary

The membership has increased since November 2022.

During this 12-month period **32** members have joined and **13** members have either lapsed or resigned with **1** member changing group.

These numbers are very encouraging but we have only seen a small number of new members on walks. We have therefore conducted a survey to gain further insight into what members would like to see included in the walking programme.

SCR – Membership Numbers over Last Year



SCR – New Members and Leavers in Last Year



South Cheshire Ramblers

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Website – Technology

All sites using Ramblers Webs need to be migrated from Joomla3 to Joomla4.

When the administrators are ready to start the migration process for the Ramblers Webs sites they will contact webmasters. There will be a set of migration instructions for those who are prepared to perform their own migrations and a small team of experienced webmasters who will migrate sites for others or give assistance where required.

In order to minimise downtime the migration process will be performed on a copy of the Production site and when it is completed the new Joomla 4 site will then be switched over to become the Production site.

Ramblers Webs administrators are making sure that the template and instructions are fit for purpose and are testing at the moment. Currently there is no date given when this migration will take place.

Although Joomla3 is out of support it will continue to work for some time yet.

The Area Walks are now displayed in date order similar to SCR walk display.

Hi All,

Please find attached an overview of the South Cheshire Ramblers accounts for 1.10.2022 – 30.09.2023, which have been audited by Paul Boniface.

Income

At the beginning of the financial year, the Group had an opening balance of £401.76, and Ramblers' funding of £1,000 had been requested and agreed. This was increased by £40 in "membership reward" donations from Ramblers Holidays and this amount was allocated to the self-funded income (for holidays and socials).

Main Funds

In this financial year there has been a total expenditure of main funds of £922.29; this includes the walk-related expenses of £627.75 for recces, £68.34 for secateurs, and £100 for the Group OS map subscription, which continues to be well used. Other expenses include room hire and refreshments for meetings, a rail fare to Birmingham for the Ramblers General Council meeting and postage for newsletters.

Self-funded account

The self-funded account had a balance of £627.42 at the beginning of the financial year. There was a small outlay of £24 for printing costs and a prize for the competition at the Annual Dinner. The HF holiday at Keswick in May broke even and £2175 has been received and paid in deposits for next year's holiday at HF Alnmouth. However, there was a loss of £385 in supplier deposit payments for the 30th anniversary event, when low ticket sales made the event unviable, and the self-funded account now stands at £258.76.

Final balance of accounts

On 30th September, the balance of our account was £595.29, with a reserve funds to expenditure ratio of 52%, which is well within the ratio of 40% - 100% recommended by the Ramblers. We have an HF holiday membership shareholding of £102.30 including interest, which also gives us a price reduction of £30 per person on our HF holidays. We hold £40.64 in cash.

Based on previous expenses, and assuming another 12 months of normal rambling activity, in July an annual budget requirement of £1,100 was requested for 2023/24. This is paid in quarterly instalments, commencing end of October 2023.

Chris Ashton
Treasurer

Annual Income

Central Office	£1,000.00 (main income)
Ramblers Holidays	£40.00 (self-funded income)
Total	£1,040.00

Main Expenditure 1.10.22 – 30.09.23

Walk related (£628 recces, £100 OS maps, £68 secateurs)	£796.09
Meetings related incl. AGM	£85.70
Walks programme meeting	£30.00
Newsletter	£10.50
Total	£922.29

Self-funded expenditure

	Dinner	Keswick	30 th Anniv.	Alnmouth	Total
Income	£640.00	£11,808.00		£2,175.00	
Expenditure	-£664.00	-£11,808.00	-£385.00	-£2,175.00	
Bank charges for cheque payments				-£1.20	
HF share holding interest				£1.54	
Balance	-£24.00	£0.00	-£385.00	£0.34	-£408.66

Initial Balance

	Main	Self-funded	Total
Central office income	£401.76	£627.42	£1,029.18
Ramblers Holidays		£40.00	
Expenditure	-£922.29	-£408.66	
Final balances	£479.47	£258.76	£738.23

Assets

	Current balance	Pending payments	Actual Balance
Bank	£595.29		£595.29
Cash	£40.64		£40.64
HF membership share holding	£102.30		£102.30
Total			£738.23

SCR AGM 23 – Secretary Report

In addition to normal secretarial functions

- **Newletters** reintroduced – 2 sent in 2023, 1 to be issued after Nov Walk Leaders meeting
- Historical **data base** of all walks since 2018 archived
- **2023 walk programme** maintained with walk numbers for analysis
- **MailChimp** system set up for Group emailing
 - SCR branded, colourful, hyperlinks
 - 166 on list representing 191 members
- First **survey** in years issued through MailChimp
- New MC **Welcome** email set up for all new members
- Further effort to include
 - **Archive old data** (Gmail?) including Risk Assessments
 - **Further develop MailChimp** system for communication with members
- Have received large amount of support from Committee and other SCR members, with exceptional cooperation from SCR Membership Secretary