



RAMBLERS

South Cheshire

SCR Committee Meeting, 4 September 2023

Minutes of Meeting

Attendees:

Trevor Park, Phil Guest, Chris Ashton, Hazel Wallis, Alan Edwards, Kevin Bush

Apologies:

Jim Eckersley, Nigel Hallam

Matters Arising from Previous Meetings:

All items arising from the May 2023 Committee meeting are covered elsewhere in the meeting.

Walk Programme:

The recent Walk Leaders meeting has resulted in a relatively full programme of walks, as per Phil Guest's recent edition of the *Walks Planner*. The formal *SCR Walks List* on the website will always lag behind the walks that are programmed in the *Walks Planner*, but September's and October's walks are almost all now to be found on SCR's Walks List. Given the success of the last Walk Leaders meeting, this will now be repeated later in November.

Monthly adverts showing specific walks for the forthcoming month are now regularly shown in the local LINK magazine. A quarterly advert for SCR is also now to be found in the Shavington Village Newsletter.

There continues to be demand for local, more focussed walks (see later). We will also soon begin to offer a longer, more challenging walk, 10-12 miles, once per month at weekends.

Paul Boniface is also offering a themed walk – in his case, a historical walk including a visit to the Wedgewood Museum in Stoke. There was a lot of encouragement for this type of initiative.

Kevin has proposed a themed walk of Liverpool (loosely themed on history of City and the River), which would involve a train to Liverpool, a walk of about 8 miles, and a lunch in the City. Again, there was encouragement to offer such a walk (likely to be in April 2024).

Kevin presented an update of the uptake of SCR's walks during 2023. Highlights include – 84 walks offered up to the end of August 2023, with about 893 walkers on these walks, meaning

an average of 10.6 walkers per walk; the evening pub walks are the most popular, with an average 15.2 participants per walk; our midweek walks are less well supported, with just under 8 people on average on each walk. The likely totals for year-end will be about 115 walks offered (the same level as at our peak in 2019) and about 1200 walkers (this is about 80% of the participants we had in 2019).

There was also a review of the status of our active walk leaders – about 30, of whom 20 are the most active. There are in addition 19 former leaders, though it's clear many of these have left RA. It was agreed that we should clarify how many, if any, former leaders are still listed as such on RA's website and Kevin will check this further with Eileen. Once clear we can consider the recovery of any SCR materials (access to OS maps, first aid kits etc) for distribution to newer walk leaders.

Of the 170 (or so) members of SRC who are sent MailChimp emails, about 80% regularly open these emails. While we thus have 120 or so "active" follower-members of SRC, we have only about 40 or so regular walkers. We have seen this situation continue with new members, where only a minority of new members become active walkers with us. It was clear we need to try to understand this further and the committee wished to undertake a survey of members (see later).

Reports from Officers / Activities:

Trevor (Chair) was very happy with the walk programme, and the diversity of walks being offered. He re-noted that we are back to the same number of walks offered, pre-Covid, and was very comfortable with an average of about 10 participants per walk. He was keen to see a questionnaire being sent to all members to gauge the views of members to our Walks Programme and will set up a small group to follow up on this (see later).

Chris (Treasurer) provided the usual report on the finances of the group, and the current surplus we hold. Some of the surplus has been consumed as we had made commitments to suppliers for the now-cancelled 30th Anniversary Event.

Some of these funds may well still be accessible; Alan will test whether we could roll-over any of these (Shavington Village Hall, Hog Roast, Red Herring events).

Hazel (Membership Secretary) reported that we were about 210 members strong. Since the last AGM, 31 have joined and 17 have left.

As noted earlier, only a minority of new members participate in our walks, and we need to understand this better. Hazel requested Walk Leaders talk directly and specifically to any new members on any walk they lead; they should gauge the reactions to the walk, to SRC and any preferences the new member has for future walks. The reactions of our new members should then be fed back to SRC and to Hazel.

Kevin presented an update to the "Welcome" email all new joiners receive, which would be in line with our new SCR branding, with hyperlinks etc. This approach will be developed further with Hazel and Trevor, prior to being rolled out to all new members as they join.

Hazel will be preparing a note to all Walk Leaders with details of items they should carry on their walks – kit bag, first aid kit, chewable aspirin, bite removers, secateurs.... Trevor will provide further information for Hazel to help in the preparation of this note.

Jim (Website editor) was not present and will be less active temporarily for the near future. Some of Jim's activities may be covered in part by Eileen, and elements in Walks Manager potentially managed by Chris.

Trevor pointed out that we need to ensure that we have coverage and backup of tasks going forward, partly to "spread the load" and partly to ensure continuity of work. He will be considering this further to review with the Committee.

Kevin suggested 2 elements of technology that might help the Committee. The first is WhatsApp. He suggested we set up 2 new WhatsApp groups, one purely for SRC Committee, the other for the Walk Leaders.

The second is to set up a common file storage system – a Vault – for key SRC files, such as agendas, minutes of meetings, presentations, walk summaries and analyses, risk assessments etc.

The Committee was keen to proceed on all of these.

Kevin pointed out to the Committee that as a result of the move from GWEM to Walks Manager it was no longer possible to search the system for walks we have conducted prior to May 16th this year. Thankfully a set of files that cover all our walks since 2018 has recently been compiled, and these can be placed in the new SRC vault as a record of where we have walked over the years.

Social (we have no specific person in this area).

Eileen Dorman is beginning to plan a coach trip away in Spring 2024, which was viewed very positively. The Committee looked forward to hearing more for Eileen on her ideas, and there were some suggestions that Morecambe Bay might be a good location for such a trip.

Hazel raised the topic of the Annual Dinner, and suggested we continue at the Cheshire Catering College, in the first half of January. This was agreed by all. Hazel will develop further an activity which will involve all participants, circulating etc, so that we are not solely sitting at the dining table.

Nigel (Paths). There was no specific discussion. However, Kevin pointed out that Cheshire East Council had been in touch, talking about the final route for the proposed dualling of the A500 near Junction 16 of the M6. There are a few walking routes which cross the route, and all will be continued / diverted to the two ends of dualling project, or the bridges that will cross the new road.

30th Anniversary Events

The Celebration Evening had to be cancelled due to the relatively low interest in it. As mentioned earlier, we are investigating other potential uses for the funds which had been used as deposits for the function.

We will not be taking the concept of a **Celebration Ramble** any further.

Member Survey

The Committee are keen for a survey / questionnaire to be circulated around members to explore further the gap between members who follow SRC (through email) and who participate in our walks. Only about one-third of those opening emails are active walkers, whether they are existing or new members. We want to test whether we can broaden the appeal of SRC to its members.

Trevor proposed that he, Hazel and Kevin take this item further and then revert to the Committee with a proposal.

Date of Next Meetings

It is proposed our next Annual General meeting be held on **Monday October 30th**. This will be held at Nantwich Museum. A post-meeting speaker will be invited, possibly someone from the Cheshire East Council Footpaths Group.

There will be another meeting of the Walk Leaders later in November, to plan the activities for Q1 2024.

The AGM of Cheshire East Ramblers will be held in Macclesfield on **November 27th**.