

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION
GEDLING & DUKERIES GROUP ON SUNDAY 25th OCTOBER 2015
AT 1400 IN LOWDHAM VILLAGE HALL

<u>PRESENT:</u> Jonathan Ankers	Mick Rawdin	Malcolm Costello
Aubrey Gamble	Pat Rogers	Alan Johnston
Pat Shaw	Alec Kingsmill	Peter Dawson
Barbara Shillito	George Wood	Dianne Maloney
Val Disney	Brian Torr	Bob Williams
Pat Hilliard	Colleen Pilgrim	Derek Baker
Polly Johnson	Ann Staples	Chris Large
David Branston	Jim Norris	Liz Pritchett
Kath Ford	Rob Musson	Jan Rek
Jenny Fillingham	Yvonne Rek	Bradley Large
Judith Gamble	Graham Dicker	

1 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The chairman welcomed everyone and stressed that this was the opportunity to express their opinions.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from: Alex McGowan, Brenda Draper, Denise Widdowson, June & Brian Goddard, Jackie Knight, Marian Kingsmill, Nick & Carol Hill, Dianne Smith.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 16th November 2014 were available to read.

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting were passed as a true record subject to one amendment.

Proposed: Ann Staples Seconded: Val Disney

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

At the 2013 AGM an alternative method of running the walks programme was discussed. It was agreed to pass the matter back to the committee, which subsequently decided to continue the present system.

5 ANNUAL REPORTS

5.1 Chairman

Another year as chairman has gone and time for reflection as to how the group has functioned over the past 12 months. I again thank the members of the committee who all have helped to run the group by putting their views across at committee meetings and have made my role somewhat easier. Although the committee form an important role in the success of the group, I know the main aim of the group is to run a varied walks programme offering a selection of walks to cater for all abilities at the same time making sure that the network of footpaths is kept open and where possible in good order.

Over the past twelve months, the Group's walks programme has been well received and I send a personal thank you to all the walk leaders for their time and effort in submitting walks for inclusion in the two programmes produced each year.

Membership is still a concern not only for our group but on a national level with so many other organisations in competition with the Ramblers.

I cannot omit from my report the recent sad loss of June & John Lord. As I said in my article in the current programme they had both been loyal supporters of the group for many years. They both led walks, attended the groups social events and I know I speak for many members that they are both missed. A memorial walk is planned for next year. You will notice from the agenda that we are going to discuss the possible merger of the Dukeries part of the group with the Mansfield & Sherwood Group. I have included in the paperwork attached the background to the initial contact from the Mansfield & Sherwood Group.

As at any AGM this your opportunity to have your say on matters you think affect the group locally and on a national scale.

George Orgill had also passed away despite being on such good form at the 25th anniversary celebrations.

5.2 **Treasurer**

Hand delivery of the walks programme has helped funds immensely. Full coach trips, a cheaper committee meeting room and a very good deal achieved on printing have all helped to offset the reduced Area grant.

5.3 **Footpaths**

Many footpaths are overgrown and cannot be cleared by the relevant authorities due to lack of resources. Paths have been cleared for walks in the current programme whilst reconnoitring prior to the walk.

There is a major enquiry regarding footpath no. 17 in Burton Joyce, which goes over Zulu's railway crossing onto footpath no. 6 to Stoke Bardolph. The Group has been campaigning since 2007, when John Lord gathered 300 user evidence forms from walkers who had been using these paths for thirty years. There was a public enquiry on Tuesday 9th September, concluding the following day, where members of the public who had originally filled in the forms gave verbal evidence before an appointed government inspector. Network Rail, Severn Trent Water Authority and Nottinghamshire County Council also gave evidence. The Ramblers were headed by Area Footpath Secretary Chris Thompson and me. We also gave verbal accounts. The verdict is awaited. There was a possibility of adopting the neighbouring trig point and dedicating it to John Lord.

5.4 **Membership**

Membership for the group at 31st August 2015 was 241. This is down by 23 for the same period last year, when the number was 264.

There were also 12 new members in the last month; including 2 from the Gedling Show. It is possible that the RA website "Walks Finder" is helping.

2014/15

12 new members - 2 which have transferred in from another group

3 members reinstated

40 members no longer in the group

25 notified Central Office of their resignation

5 of which have moved away

15 memberships lapsed without notification or response to correspondence

NUMBER OF MEMBERS ATTACHED TO THE GROUP

31st August 2015

Total	241
Annual Individual	133
Annual Joint	101
Life Individual	5
Life Joint	2
Payments Pending	8
Members no longer in the group	0
New Members	1
Members Reinstated	1

New Members – Questionnaires

Since November 2014 new members have been asked or sent questionnaires as to how they were introduced to Gedling & Dukeries Ramblers. The idea was to find best ways to recruit new members.

Out of 8 new members

2 transferred in from another

1 Gedling County Park official opening

5 Recommendations

Membership Fees

Membership fees increased from 1st May 2015 as follows

Individual Annual	£ 34.00
Individual Monthly	£ 3.25
Joint Annual	£ 45.00
Joint Monthly	£ 4.25
Individual Concession Annual*	£ 20.50
Individual Concession Monthly*	£ 2.25
Joint Concession Annual*	£ 27.50
Joint Concession Monthly*	£ 2.75

These rates are valid until 30th April 2016

*Concessionary rates are available for people on means tested benefits, people solely reliant on state pension or full time students only.

Membership renewal payments online and monthly direct debits as becoming more popular.

5.5 **Area**

The role of the Liaison Officer is to ensure that the views and interests of Gedling and Dukeries are taken into account in the Area Council deliberations. At the same time members of the Local Group need to be informed of key issues in the higher realms of the Ramblers Association.

During the course of the year the new approach to dealing with Rights of Way has become embedded. Rights of Way amendments and proposals are dealt with by “District Rights of Way Co-ordinators” who liaise with Local Groups. Gedling and Dukeries Group is included in a District along with Broxtowe and Nottingham City. We are covered by the Area Rights of Way Officer – Chris Thompson – himself rather than having our own “District Co-ordinator”. There continue to be problems with the run-down of administrative support for Rights of Way by the statutory bodies.

In addition to Rights of Way, representatives of the Area Council are in regular communication with planning bodies about all aspects of planning applications which

might affect the countryside. We live in an era in which Government Policy is to “free up the planning process to support growth”. It is now Gedling Borough Council strategic intention to “always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved”. It is no longer necessary for planners to adopt the “precautionary principle” when building on flood plains. Also, planners no longer have to “robustly justify” why complying with policy requirements is not viable or feasible. It is also the stated intention of the Government to free up the planning process with regards to building houses on “brownfield sites”. As Ramblers we have to pay particular attention to the potential application of these changes of emphasis on developments in the Green Belt. Our legal ability to challenge any such developments has become more restricted and Gedling is an area of the County particularly at risk.

In the case of HS2 we made a submission to HS2 Ltd as part of the consultation process in which we laid down our proposals for protecting all the rights of way which would be affected. The consultation was specifically on the route through Toton so we were somewhat surprised about reports that the route might be to the west through Breaston; a route on which there has been no consultation at all. This alternative now seems to have been a red herring and the proposed route is again specifically through Toton. We wait to see what happens next.

During the course of the year fracking has become very much a live issue because of the proposal by Igas to make an application to drill at Misson in North Notts. The Ramblers Association policy on fracking is that we are “concerned about the impact of onshore shale gas exploration and exploitation both on access to places where we walk and on the beauty of the wider countryside. We will oppose such operations where we believe these impacts to be unacceptable”. The proposed Misson Site impacts on no public rights of way and is a brownfield site. However, it is also immediately adjacent to the Misson Carr Wildlife Trust Site and the Area is therefore objecting. This may seem to have no direct impact on Gedling and the Dukeries but we do walk throughout the County and there are two areas where there are likely to be further applications – the “Gainsborough Trough” in the north of the County and the Widmerpool Trough is in the South.

Another area in which both Gedling and the Dukeries and the Area are concerned is that of the development of renewable energy sources – mainly Solar Panels and Wind Turbines. The Ramblers Association has recently issued a detailed policy statement on this subject which states:

“As Ramblers we recognise the threat posed to our countryside by climate change, which could severely change our cherished landscapes. We support measures to reduce harmful emissions of carbon dioxide, including by increasing the amount of energy produced from a wide range of renewable sources.

Renewable energy developments should be strategically planned and sensitively sited. Proper assessments should be carried out prior to development to ensure that they do not damage sensitive landscapes, wildlife or historic places.

For large wind and solar developments sensitive areas such as national parks should be avoided.

Where wind turbines are built on onshore they should be located as far from public rights of way and access land as possible with every effort made to minimise the impact on walkers.

It is our policy that no area should be asked to host too many wind or solar farms.

Wildlife and historic sites are often an integral part of landscapes. However, concerns about impacts on wildlife sites or species or cultural and historic sites will generally not be enough in themselves to justify an objection from the Ramblers. This is because these issues are not at the heart of our charitable purpose; in the way that landscape and public access are."

The document sets out a process for dealing with such issues. It should be noted that the philosophy of the Ramblers is not one of objecting to all such developments and indeed we are generally supportive of the need for them.

Once again Gedling and Dukeries members are reminded that if they have any issue they wish raised directly with the Area Council they are more than welcome to contact me at any time.

5.6 **Coach**

There were two coach trips this year: Church Stretton in May and Boughton on the Water in July. Many thanks to Polly, George and Val. The weather was kind on both days with dry, sunny weather. Thank you to everyone who paid on time. I know it was not easy as I was not on many Sunday walks.

We have two trips in the pipeline for next year. I hope to have more details at the AGM. I am willing to stay as Coach Secretary for the coming year; but I am hoping that there is someone out there who will take on the job at the 2016 AGM.

5.7 **Web**

During the last year one new feature was added to the web site: a button was added to the Walks Programme page to hide or reveal the past walks within the current 6 month period. Past walks are hidden by default, so that when you first open the page, the next walk is at the top of the list and you don't have to scroll up and down.

Apart from that, the web site continues to be a frequent route for new people to get in touch and join a walking group.

5.8 **Social**

Our Christmas 2014 fuddle went very well thanks to Dorothy and John. People were very generous giving raffle prizes and enough money was made to cover the cost of the hall.

In May we held our annual dinner at the "Ramsdale Golf Club." 49 people attended and all enjoyed a very nice meal. Margaret Harrison a blue badge guide gave a very hilarious after dinner talk. It was a lovely evening.

Raffles were held on both bus trips. Church Stretton made £22 and Bourton in the Water £21 25, which goes towards club funds.

5.9 **Walks Programme**

I am pleased to report that both March to August 2015 and the September 2015 to February 2016 walks programme were produced without any problems. All the walks coordinators submit their respective walks to me on time and I was able to produce the programme well in advance of the first walks in the programme. For the March-August edition we had 16 A walks, 23 B walks, 17 Wednesday walks, 18 Thursday walks and 2 coach trips. For the September-February edition we had 18 A walks, 23 B walks, 20 Thursday walks and 4 Saturday walks. This is a similar amount to previous years. There is still scope of additional walks as not all the slots in the programme are filled. Some slots

in the programme were added later and advertised only on the website. Any submissions by new walks leaders would greatly help keep the group active and thriving.

5.10 **B Walks**

Although it has been a difficult year, I have had a good response from our new leaders, which has enabled the Group to fill the Sept 2015 to February 2016 programme; now in print. The new walk dates for March 2016 to August 2016 are now available.

I also wish to thank all our leaders for their efforts.

6 ELECTION OF NEW COMMITTEE

The post of Countryside Officer remained vacant. The Chairman said that this role was important, with the government relaxing planning regulations to meet housing targets. The Chairman also stated that he would like the publicity role to be filled. In addition, Ann Staples was starting her last year as coach secretary. The Chairman encouraged attendees to consider volunteering and to spread the word to others on future walks.

Most of the existing committee were re-elected unanimously. Nominated and duly elected were: Brian Torr, Graham Dicker, George Wood, Jim Norris, Mick Rawdin, Jonathan Ankers, Brian O'Neill, Val Disney, Pat Rogers, Ann Staples, Graham Dicker Alex McGowan and Liz Pritchett. The first meeting would be on 12th November 2015.

7 CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS

There were no motions proposed.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A proposal had come through Area to transfer the Dukeries part of the Group, including present and future members, to the Mansfield Group. It was felt that the affected members should have the opportunity to select to which group they were affiliated. Ann Staples reported that one was very angry and wished to stay.

Aubrey explained that, originally, Dukeries approached Mansfield but were not welcomed. It was thought that the new Mansfield committee now wanted to grow their group and funds.

Jenny Fillingham said that existing members would have the choice and only future members would be automatically allocated to Mansfield. Area would also look favourably on any request for extra funds for Gedling. The allocation would be on a postcode basis. The name "Dukeries" would also transfer.

Val Disney reported that, of the 17 people involved, 5 had transferred to Gedling.

The Chairman proposed that each Dukeries member should be asked. Jenny suggested that a vote could be taken on transferring the postcodes, with the name deferred.

It was agreed to write to members first. The issue was entirely deferred until the 2016 AGM.

There would be a Geoff Rix memorial walk on 3rd November and a bench on Robin Hood Hill would be dedicated.

There would also be a memorial walk for June & John Lord, led by June's sister.

The Chairman thanked Peter Dawson for his contribution to the committee over many years.

There being no other business the meeting closed at **1515**.