

**TAKE A HIKE  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Date: Saturday 3 December 2011  
Location: Adelphi Hotel, Leeds

Committee attendees:

General Secretary / Treasurer: Vicky Fleming (VF)  
Walks Secretary: Neil Chester (NC)  
Social Secretary: Alex Fleming (AF)  
Membership Secretary: Helen Thompson (HT)

Apologies:

Web Secretary: Dave Pannell (DP)

Also represented:

Michael Church (MC) West Riding Area Vice President

VF opened the meeting by thanking all for their attendance and reviewing the planned agenda. She noted that all committee members would be standing down with only DP putting his name forward for re-election this year. There would also be a proposal to add a new committee role.

Minutes of last meeting

There being no matters arising the minutes of the 2010 AGM were agreed.

See note later in AOB.

Reports

General Secretary / Treasurer

- Copies of the accounts for the year to 30 September 2011 were distributed to attendees of the meeting.
- It was noted that there was a fairly significant cash balance at the financial year end which was due to timing of the Autumn Ball. Final payments were issued in early October.
- The group remains largely self funded, with the exception of £75 paid for web domain registration (covering 2 years registration).

Walks

- There were 205 walks this year, up 5 from the previous year.
- Average attendance remains at around 15.
- Average walk distance is about 8.5 miles, but with a good mix of shorter and longer walks.
- There have been regular walks all year including through the bad weather at the start of the year.

Socials

- AF noted a large thanks to all for organising the variety of social events this year which have included theatre trips, pub meets, visits to art galleries, cinema evenings etc. Special thanks were noted for Zoe Carroll for organising the Autumn Ball.
- There were 107 socials in total this year.
- Monthly pub meet: the Scabby Taps continues to provide free food for the group's monthly pub meet. This has been of variable quality, but AF advised that it has been difficult to provide estimated numbers due to variable attendance this year. It was agreed that there would be no change to the venue.
- Ticketed events: a number of successful events this year – the summer bash, autumn ball, Hallowe'en and Christmas party (final ticket numbers to be advised to the venue after the meeting).
- Calendar
  - o Submissions had tailed off after initial enthusiasm.

- Timing has to be Sept – Sept in order to get calendars printed in October for the following year.
- New committee to consider interest for annual competition.
- Issues and 'spats' this year.
  - The committee has dealt with a number of issues this year, most of which it is felt could be resolved without their involvement.
  - The committee's role is not to act as parent / teacher in resolving disputes between members where most could easily be resolved by discussion between adults.
  - DP has offered a member reconciliation service.
  - A question was raised as to the reason these matters were not covered by the Membership Secretary and a brief discussion followed around ways of dealing with member issues and committee roles.
  - It was clarified that most issues had been resolved as a team with the committee member who had been approached responding to the problem. There was one significant official complaint during the year relating to a dispute between 2 members following an alleged incident on a walk which had been investigated by HT with a response provided on behalf of the committee.

#### Membership

- As at the end of November 11 the active membership of the group was 315 of which 261 were individual memberships and 54 joint.
- Membership has remained reasonably consistent throughout the year despite an average of 5-10 new members a month from the Ramblers monthly reports.
- The mix of individual and joint memberships has changed in favour of individual memberships during the year!
- A copy of the Ramblers' Code of Conduct was distributed with the agenda and accounts. As noted during AF's report, it is important that everyone respects what is a general guideline for behaviour between adults in a relatively informal group.
- Messages have been posted on the walk leaders' board this year to remind leaders that they need to be a member of the Ramblers in order to be covered by the Ramblers' insurance.
- A discussion followed regarding the issue of those not joining the Ramblers. There have been some issues, as noted with other organisations, with central office renewal documentation which is issued with a payment reminder as well as for those on regular Direct Debit. This documentation is not always clear about payment requirements.
- Various issues were also raised about the need for membership of the Ramblers when the group does not actively participate in many of the central organisation's objectives (and whether it should), concessions available and how membership fees are used to contribute to the objectives of the Ramblers. MC was asked to comment and noted that the Ramblers has never been like other groups which are just simply walking groups, the Ramblers was set up with a number of campaigning objectives, eg rights of access in the countryside and therefore fees are contributing to the overall enjoyment of all walkers rather than specifically to the running of this group.
- A question was raised regarding the average age of group members. HT advised that this data was not available from the monthly reports supplied by central office, although there is a general awareness that the average age of the group is probably in the late 30s with increasing numbers in their 40s.
- A discussion followed around the regular issue of whether the group should still be described as 20's and 30's. Any change of name would require a motion to change the constitution at a General Meeting which would then be submitted to the Ramblers for approval. **ACTION: new committee to organise an EGM (likely to be at the February pub meet subject to being able to circulate the necessary notification to all members). The motion will be to drop the 20's and 30's and simply describe the group as a young person's walking group.**

#### Web

- DP submitted a written report together with apologies for absence which was read to the meeting by AF. Copy at Appendix 1.

#### New committee role

- VF has distributed a standard Ramblers description of the role of Footpath Secretary.

- The Ramblers is differentiated from most other walking groups by its campaigning work and West Riding Area would appreciate if it was possible for this group to be more involved.
- MC was asked to expand on the role description and allay some concerns about the level of commitment involved as many of TAH's members work full time and cannot make the same time commitment. It was agreed that as this was a new role there would be scope for any nominee to set their own template with the support of the Area Footpath Officer.
- There being general agreement that this was a good idea VF asked if there would be any interest in the role. Steve Fleming (SF) confirmed that he would like to put his name forward.
- VOTE: it was unanimously agreed to add the Footpath Secretary role to the committee.

#### Elections

- Current committee members confirmed their resignations.
- Nominations for all positions had been requested prior to the AGM with new names being considered only where no volunteers had been received.
- Committee positions elected unopposed as follows:

Role	Name	Seconded by
General Secretary / Treasurer	Debra Sutcliffe	Robin Dearden
Membership Secretary	Florence van Schependom	Helen Thompson
Social Secretary	Martin Sutcliffe	Ian Parker
Walks Secretary	Robin Dearden	Chris Longstaff
Web Secretary	Dave Pannell	Martin Sutcliffe

- Footpath Secretary. Nominated by Robin Dearden, seconded by Alex Fleming. Elected unopposed.
- New committee members provided brief introductions. Robin in particular noted special thanks to his predecessor Neil Chester for 6 years of valuable service to the group. This was endorsed by those present.

#### AOB

- VF thanked the 2011 committee for their service, with special thanks to NC for 6 years service.
- Chris Longstaff brought up the issue of walk leadership and first aid training. This has not been offered for some years and is an important part of what we do. Robin agreed that this is something he would like to take on in his new role, but would also like to ask for support to drive it. Various suggestions were discussed including making the buddy system more visible and holding navigation / leadership etc workshops. MC asked if the committee would consider offering training to other groups – **to be discussed by the new committee.**
- Gin Aylett noted that the Adelphi had been a successful venue for the summer bash and also worked for this meeting.
- An action from last year's minutes was raised - it was noted that the issue of high attendance on walks was left as an action for the 2011 committee. This was discussed and whilst it was agreed this had not been specifically addressed, it had not been such an issue this year. It was agreed that the decision to limit numbers on a walk could be at the walk leader's discretion either by specifically asking for advance notification of attendance or via the walk description. Various suggestions were put forward including training for leaders in how to deal with larger groups (nominated backmarkers etc), scheduling walks to clash with another alternative if it was thought likely to be popular (eg a moderate grade low level walk on a summer Sunday). **ACTION: continue to monitor and address as necessary.**

**No fighting occurred and the meeting was closed.**

## Appendix 1. Take A Hike Web Secretary Report – Dec 2011

### Overview:

- It's been a very busy year on the Take A Hike website front, with most notably the launch of a brand new website to replace the original site that Dave built back in 2003!! It was sad to finally retire Alan (The Take A Hike header mascot for 8 years!) and Dave would also like to thank the previous caretakers Simon and Paul for keeping the old site going for so long.
- Dave would also like to clear up some rumours which have been circulated regarding how the new web site was funded. Unfortunately there were various messages posted on the messageboard and emails sent suggesting Dave had been paid £500 by the group for creating the website. In fact the complete opposite is true. The cost of the technical build of the site was £350 which Dave paid out of his own pocket to one of his employees at The Design Mechanics, as the group simply didn't have the funds at the time. All Dave's design time and ongoing maintenance he has donated completely free of charge. He is currently in talks to see if he can reclaim the fee he paid for the site to be built from the West Riding Area Ramblers Association in their 2012 marketing budget – so the new site has not cost Take A Hike a penny.

### Report on website usage:

- The new Take A Hike website is receiving on average 32,000 visits a month, which is up by around 5,000 on last year.
- This is generated by, on average, 400 unique users – which means we all visit the site around 80 times a month or two and a half times a day!
- Most people visit the site either at lunch time, or at between 9.00 – 10.00pm.
- There is a slight dip on visitors mid-week, but on average there is no specific day of the week when people visit the site over any other.
- The most popular page on the website is the walks diary as you would suspect, followed by the messageboard, home page and then the social diary. However, most people seem to have the messageboard bookmarked as this is the most popular “entry page” for the website.
- Most people come to the website direct, but we also get 1,500 visits a month from people who find us on Google (mainly by searching for “Take A Hike Leeds” or “Take A Hike Halifax”); 65 visits a month from Facebook; 50 from the main Ramblers website and 20 visits a month from the Ramblers West Riding area website.

### Other activity:

- Apart from the new website Dave also re-launched our Facebook page earlier in the year after our old Facebook Group became obsolete. This is proving a great resource to remind people about walks and social events as well as promoting further socialising between members. If you are on Facebook I'd urge you to “Like” the page which is linked from our homepage.
- Dave has also been keeping our website blog up to date with interesting news, as well as making sure we're getting mentioned more in the “area” Ramblers publications – with special thanks to Rob Dearden, who's Take A Hike photographs have been used on the covers of all the recent area walks booklets and Ramblers Magazine (which Dave also produces for the Area Ramblers!).
- And finally, Dave has also taken on the role of group doorman (he has actually worked as a doorman when he was at university!) He will be manning the door again for the Christmas Party – so if you haven't got your ticket, you're not getting in!