

Forest of Dean Group

MINUTES OF 38th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 4th NOVEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Peter Robbins in the Chair – plus 27 attending (list attached).

APOLOGIES: Mike Ingleby, Sheila Constable, Ken and Jean Whalley, Matt Gothill, Gerry and Dylis Brown, Roy Emes, Anne O’Chala, Sue Shergold, Sarah Lattimer, Jenny Robbins.

Prior to the formal AGM, Ben Klinkenberg of Oxford Brookes University gave a short address explaining his study entitled “People and wild boar interactions in the Forest of Dean and the effects on attitudes and land use in the area”. Members who wished to take part in his subsequent interviews on this topic were asked to give Ben their contact details.

MINUTES: The Minutes of the AGM held on 6th November 2015, which had been circulated earlier in the year, were approved, adopted and signed.

MATTERS ARISING: There were no matters arising.

1. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT: Peter Robbins thanked Mike Ingleby for his work whilst Chair of the group until earlier in the year and he went on to thank all members of the committee for their considerable contribution to the running of the group. He had been an interim Chair since early 2016 and had much appreciated support he had received from all the committee.

In particular, Peter expressed thanks to the walks leaders whose efforts had led to a wonderful variety of walks in the Forest of Dean, Wye Valley, Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons, Cotswolds, Elan Valley, Gower Coast and Carmarthen Vans. This had attracted many members and visitors from other Ramblers groups as well as Area Chair, Ray Chaney, Area Footpaths Officer, Richard Holmes and Ian Blomeley the Enforcement Officer at Monmouthshire County Council.

He reported that again this year our group had participated in the MonDean Walking Festival, leading a walk on every day of the festival which included several walks from our “Exploring Historic Dean” book of walks and culminating in the iconic 21 mile Three Castles Walk. The overall number of participants had increased from the previous year, possibly due to a more focused advertising campaign.

Ronnie Walker was thanked for organizing a walking holiday in North Wales earlier in the year which had been well supported.

Peter provided members with a forward look by reporting on the planned Christmas walk and lunch on 3rd December, a leadership course for new leaders (and to serve as a refresher for existing leaders) arranged for 21st January 2017 at Yorkley Community Centre and an advanced



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First Aid course being arranged for next February. Dependent on the level of interest, an introductory First Aid course could also be put on during 2017.

Looking even further ahead, Peter informed members of the potential for a walking holiday based in Skipton in May 2018. More details would be issued in due course.

Finally, Peter was delighted to report that Forest of Dean Ramblers now have their own FaceBook page which is open to the general public and he hoped this might attract some new members. He thanked Jenny Robbins for setting this up.

2. SECRETARY'S REPORT: Jackie Huck reported on her second year as Secretary referring to general secretarial duties undertaken in support of committee meetings and activities. She thanked Malcolm Shergold (Webmaster) on behalf of the committee and the wider membership for his support in ensuring emails are correctly routed and for his work to maintain and develop the group's website. She also expressed her appreciation of the support she had received from Pam Cullis throughout the year and extended special thanks to both Pam and Maurice Cullis for hosting committee meetings.

Jackie reported on a system which had now been set up to support the distribution and sales of our three leafleted walks and our book, Exploring Historic Dean. Thanks were expressed to John and Jean Sheraton, Carol Lambert, Barbara Fisher and Ronnie Walker who, along with Jackie, were all linked in with local outlets. This arrangement was supported on the finance side by the treasurer, David Pollard and Malcolm Shergold continued to deal with sales via our website.

Jackie continued by reporting now that our three leafleted walks were being actively promoted, a system had been set up to ensure each is walkable. Chris and Adrian Wasley look after Soudley Circles, John Sheraton looks after Beechenhurst Trail whilst John Bevan, Ian Walding and Irene Lowthain look after the Highmeadow Trail. Special thanks were added for the coordination role Chris Wasley undertakes, reporting problems or issues to either the Forestry Commission or Maurice Cullis (who has recently taken over as coordinator for working parties) as appropriate.

Jackie was pleased to report that despite not having a Footpaths Officer since the last AGM, a number of arrangements had been put in place to cover essential aspects of this area of work and as such a more effective and coordinated approach had gradually developed. More information about footpaths would be covered later in the meeting.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT: David Pollard confirmed the accounts for 2015/16 had been audited and signed off by Ronnie Walker as independent examiner. The required return had also been submitted to Area Treasurer. Copies of the Income, Expenditure and Balance Sheets for both the general running of the Group and The Publications and Projects Account were made available to members. David drew attention to the amount of funding which had been ring fenced for future projects as yet to be identified. No questions were raised therefore the financial accounts were accepted. Further full copies of these accounts may be requested from the Secretary.

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David concluded his report by informing the meeting that although he was standing for election as Treasurer for 2016/17, if elected it would be his last year.

4. FOOTPATHS REPORT: Peter Robbins was pleased to report that, following the vacancy during the past year, he would be nominating John Baker as Footpaths Officer for the Forest of Dean area and Jenny Robbins as Cross Border Footpaths Officer at the relevant agenda item later in the meeting. He would also propose the Forest of Dean Footpaths Officer to be the committee member.

John Baker reported to the meeting on the work he had undertaken in support of Richard Holmes (Area Footpaths Officer) who had taken on a “holding role” on our behalf for the past year. John explained that he had mainly been Richard’s eyes on the ground especially for issues such as planning permissions affecting footpaths or applications for footpath diversions. Over this period he had dealt with 4 footpath issues and 2 footpath diversions.

John drew members’ attention to the closure of the Lower Lydbrook iron bridge which had been deemed unsafe. He had been involved in discussions with the relevant local authorities who were continuing to pursue an appropriate resolution to this important right of way on the Wye Valley Walk.

Richard Holmes was formally thanked for his help and Roger Cox was also thanked for his continued work to look after the north of our patch through his group made up of parish representatives.

5. WALKS CO-ORDINATOR’S REPORT: Maurice Cullis reported on the last 12 months which had yet again provided an active walks programme covering such areas as the Brecon Beacons, the Cotswolds and beyond. The walks had varied in length from 4 to 17 miles enjoying the different seasons and scenery. There were 111 walks as well as walks undertaken during the organized holiday in North Wales. Maurice went on to report that this had only been possible because of the time and commitment given by walk leaders who he thanked on behalf of the wider membership and from him personally for making his job easier during his last year as walks coordinator.

6. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY’S REPORT: Babs Jones reported membership of the Forest of Dean Ramblers at 31st October 2016 stood at 211. The number of new members joining since the last AGM was 14, made up of one member transferred from another Group, 11 members new to Ramblers and 2 re-instated members.

Throughout the year Babs had circulated to members copies of newsletters and programmes, information about various activities and holiday details. The majority of communication had been by email with postal copies of programmes and newsletters dropping to 47.

Babs confirmed that she had been in the membership role for three years and, as notified at the last AGM, would not be standing for re-election.

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Full copies of officers' reports are available on request to the Secretary

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Position:	Nominee:	Proposed by:	Seconded by:	Voted:
Chair	Peter Robbins	Jackie Huck	Alan Fisher	unanimously
Secretary	Jackie Huck	Peter Robbins	Margaret Walker	unanimously
Treasurer	David Pollard	Rod Goodman	Peter Robbins	unanimously
Membership	vacancy			
Footpaths (FoD area and committee member)	John Baker	Jackie Huck	Peter Robbins	unanimously
Footpaths (Cross Border)	Jenny Robbins	Carol Lambert	Maurice Cullis	unanimously
Publicity	vacancy			
Walks coordinator	Ian Walding	Maurice Cullis	Peter Robbins	unanimously
Webmaster	Malcolm Shergold	David Pollard	Alan Fisher	unanimously
Committee members	Pam Cullis Maurice Cullis John Bevan	Barbara Fisher	Jean Sheraton	unanimously
Newsletter Editor	Ronnie Walker	Pam Cullis	Margaret Walker	unanimous
Area Representative	vacancy			

8. **APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR:** Ronald Walker was appointed independent auditor for 2016/17

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:** none.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm