

Forest of Dean Group

MINUTES OF 40th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 9th NOVEMBER 2018

PRESENT: Peter Robbins in the Chair – plus 16 attending (list of names available on request).

APOLOGIES: were received from 25 members (list of names available on request)

MINUTES: The Minutes of the AGM held on 10th November 2017, 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 welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Bernie Gill, Area Chair. He went on to thank all those who had contributed to making the FoDR Group a very successful walking group over 2017/18. Peter wished to especially thank the Treasurer, Ronnie Walker, and Secretary, Jackie Huck for their continued hard work over the past year. He also thanked Ronnie Walker for editing the Group's newsletters and for arranging the much loved annual holiday to North Wales in April 2018. John Baker was thanked for his work as Footpaths Officer and to all those monitoring footpaths across our patch. Peter gave special thanks to Malcolm Shergold, Webmaster, for designing and maintaining our website, supporting the email system and for keeping such a comprehensive record of walks for leaders to draw on; no other group had such a facility.

Peter expressed his gratitude to Lynn Stockley, Membership Secretary for the great job she had done over the year particularly in relation to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Peter recognised the vital role of walks leaders which had resulted in a wonderful variety of walks being made available to members throughout the year. Walks had taken place across the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley as well as in many other areas such as the Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons, south Wales and the Cotswolds. All this would not have been possible but for the work of our Walks Co-ordinator, Ian Walding who Peter also thanked along with John Bevan, committee member.

Peter referred to other activities which had taken place over the past year. The Christmas Lunch and pre-walk had been well supported and a navigation course delivered by Mike Ingleby was much appreciated by those attending. He went on to refer to two highlights of the year, firstly the Group's holiday to Skipton, Yorkshire Dales, in May which gave members a choice of two walks daily over the week. He thanked Jenny Robbins and Sue Marshall for organizing this holiday.

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Secondly, 2018 had been the Group's 40th Anniversary and a celebratory event took place on 22nd September arranged by Jackie Huck when some 65 past and present members enjoyed a short walk followed by an afternoon of nostalgia looking through a range of photographs and memorabilia culminating in the cutting of an anniversary cake baked and iced by Dorothy Andrews of Chepstow U3A.

Looking forward to the year ahead, Peter drew members' attention to the Christmas lunch on 30th November which would be preceded by a morning's walk stating that a few places still remained should anyone be interested. He also mentioned Ronnie Walker's annual trip to North Wales and the holiday to Grange-over-Sands (Lake District) being organized by Sue Marshall.

2. SECRETARY'S REPORT: Jackie Huck reported on her fourth year as Secretary referring to general secretarial duties undertaken in support of committee meetings and activities.

Jackie reported on the system which had been set up to support the distribution and sales of our leafleted walks and book, Exploring Historic Dean. She stated it was working well and that was thanks to John and Jean Sheraton, Barbara Fisher and Margaret and Ronnie Walker who, along with herself, were all linked in with local outlets. This arrangement was supported on the finance side by the Treasurer, Ronnie Walker and Malcolm Shergold continued to deal with sales via our website.

Jackie was also pleased to report how well the system was working for ensuring each of these trails remain accessible to walkers. 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 for action by volunteer members of our Group) and to Derek Sheppard for his maintenance work.

Finally Jackie reported that £750 had been donated from the "book fund" to support the restoration of St Mary's Bridge, Lydney which, once complete, would re-open a number of footpaths to the benefit of the local community. Jackie thanked Area Committee, but especially Bernie Gill, for their support in gaining CO approval for this donation. She concluded her report by asking for further ideas as to how this fund could be used in the future.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT: Ronnie Walker confirmed the accounts for 2017/18 had been audited and signed off by Alan Fisher 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. He summarized the financial position as £5,513.03 within the accounts with an asset of £2074.32 tied up in 774 EHD books. No questions were raised and the adoption of the financial accounts was proposed by Susan Warren, seconded by Gerry Brown and unanimously accepted. Both Ronnie and Peter gave a vote of thanks to Alan Fisher for undertaking the audit.

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3. FOOTPATHS OFFICER REPORT: In his absence John Baker had provided a report to be read to the meeting. In it he reported on his continued good working relationship with GCC and his footpath colleagues across the county. He had regularly attended the monthly meeting organized at Area level which had enabled him to have a positive influence in the reporting of access problems and maintenance of footpath issues. His report stated that despite resolving some 40 to 50 “jobs” each month the level of issues outstanding remained fairly consistent at some 200 countywide. On average he reviewed between 18 and 35 planning applications per month and would object if a PROW was compromised.

Notable issues throughout the year included Yorkley Court Farm where a retrospective motocross planning application had been withdrawn and an order to reinstate the site, including PROWs, had been issued. Illegal earth works at Tidenham Quarry which had encroached on a PROW was an ongoing issue whilst at Elton Farm the car parking encroachment on a PROW had been successfully resolved.

Finally he reported on the good news that Stowfield Bridge, Lydbrook had reopened, albeit on a temporary repair basis, and this had restored vital PROW links across the River Wye and for the Wye Valley Walk.

Members present at the AGM wished to formally record their thanks for the important footpath work John had willingly and expertly taken on.

5. WALKS CO-ORDINATOR’S REPORT: Ian Walding thanked members who had put on walks stating that over 100 walks had been led over the past year ranging from 4 miles to 15 miles and across many different areas. He reiterated Peter’s positive comments about the Group’s walk leaders.

6. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY’S REPORT: In her absence Lynn Stockley had submitted a report to be read to the meeting.

Membership was currently 202, a slight decline from a start point at the beginning of the year of 204 although the numbers had fluctuated during the year. The broad picture was that there were 18 new members. The highest rate of leaving was due to lapsed membership payment, with smaller numbers either leaving FoDR or resigning from Ramblers altogether. Sadly 3 of our members had passed away during the year.

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

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7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Bernie Gill took the Chair for this item until the new Chair for 2018/19 was elected

Position:	Nominee:	Proposed by:	Seconded by:	Voted:
Chair	Peter Robbins	Jackie Huck	Ronnie Walker	unanimously
Secretary	Jackie Huck	Peter Robbins	Malcolm Shergold	unanimously
Treasurer	Ronnie Walker	Peter Robbins	Pam Cullis	unanimously
Membership	Lynn Stockley	Jackie Huck	Ian Walding	unanimously
Footpaths (FoD area and committee member)	John Baker	Jackie Huck	Malcolm Shergold	unanimously
Footpaths (Cross Border)	Jenny Robbins	Peter Robbins	Jackie Huck	unanimously
Publicity	vacancy			
Walks coordinator	Ian Walding	Gerry Brown	John Sheraton	unanimously
Webmaster	Malcolm Shergold	Peter Robbins	Jackie Huck	unanimously
Committee members	John Bevan Sue Marshall Mike Ingleby	Peter Robbins Peter Robbins Jackie Huck	Derek Sheppard John Sheraton Malcolm Shergold	unanimously
Newsletter Editor	Ronnie Walker	Pam Cullis	Ian Walding	unanimously
Area Representative	vacancy			

9. **APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR:** Alan Fisher was appointed independent auditor for 2018/19

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Bernie Gill was given the opportunity of saying a few words about Area; its role and links to local Groups. Area is the conduit between CO and local Groups in terms of money, issues and communications. Bernie went on to urge members of the FODR to elect a representative to Area, not to take on a specific role but to assure that issues pertinent to the FoD were taken fully into

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account. He went on to explain the stringent approach CO had initially taken to the implementation of GDPR but that this had been reviewed as the terms of the requirements had become clearer. Generally the situation had settled into a much more reasonable approach and one more befitting of small, voluntarily run Groups. He continued to liaise with CO on a number of issues still to be improved. He concluded by thanking FoDR for agreeing to host Area AGM on 19th January 2019 and for being invited to join the Group at its 40th celebratory event.

Roger Cox reminded members that County Council Footpath Officers were particularly interested in having reports of foot bridges considered dangerous or in need to repair.

There was a general discussion about systems to alert members in the event of a change or cancellation of a walk. It was considered that the requirements of the GDPR had made things more difficult given CO would only issue membership listings to Membership Secretaries. Although it was rare to cancel or change a walk it was agreed that walk leaders took all reasonable steps to communicate any change and that there was a personal responsibility on the part of an individual member to check the website or phone the leader should they be in doubt a walk would go ahead. This was particularly important where adverse weather was forecast.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.40 pm

Confirmed: unanimously

Date: 8th November 2019