

# Forest of Dean Group

## MINUTES OF 41st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 8th NOVEMBER 2019

**PRESENT:** Peter Robbins in the Chair – plus 23 attending (list of names available on request).

**APOLOGIES:** were received from 12 members (list of names available on request)

**MINUTES:** The Minutes of the AGM held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018, which had been circulated earlier in the year, were approved and adopted.

**MATTERS ARISING:** There were no matters arising.

**1. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Peter welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Bernie Gill, Area Chair and Michelle Holden, Area Walking Environment Officer. He went on to thank all those who had contributed to making the FoDR Group a very successful walking group over 2018/19. 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 who would be gradually retiring as Membership Secretary as she handed over to her successor over the following months.

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 and Sue Marshall, both committee members.

Peter referred to other activities which had taken place over the past year. The Christmas Lunch and pre-walk had been well supported and much interest had already been shown for this year's walk and meal. He went on to refer to the Group's holiday to Grange-over-Sands (Lake District) last April/May which gave members a choice of walks daily over the week. He thanked Sue Marshall for organizing this holiday as well as the walk leaders.

Peter concluded his report by reminding members of the Group's financial contribution to the reopening of St Mary's Footbridge in Lydney. Representatives had attended the official opening

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and a programmed walk had taken place including this footbridge soon after it's opening. He also thanked members who had played host to the Area AGM in January 2019.

**2. SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Jackie Huck reported on her fifth 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. Jackie asked that any member present who wished to help with trail maintenance to have a chat with her after the meeting or contact Chris Wasley.

Continuing, Jackie reported that Gloucestershire Records Office now held a full and varied set of documents covering the Group's first 40 years which remained accessible to us at any time. She confirmed that future documents would be held only in electronic form.

Looking forward Jackie planned to run a refresher first aid course. This one day course would be tailored to our needs and include practical advice on how to manage an emergency in remote or inaccessible areas. She would be sending out full details in the New Year.

Finally, on behalf of the Group, Jackie thanked Peter for his Chairmanship.

**3. TREASURER'S REPORT:** Ronnie Walker confirmed the accounts for 2018/19 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 had been made available to members prior to the meeting. The main account balance at year end was £535.96 whilst the Book Find balance stood at £3642.98 with a further £70.53 held in the PayPal account. He confirmed assets of £1849.20 tied up in 690 EHD books with potential revenue of approximately £4,500. No questions were raised on the accounts and their adoption was proposed by Jackie Huck, seconded by Peter Robbins and unanimously accepted. Both Ronnie and Peter gave a vote of thanks to Alan Fisher for undertaking the audit.

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There followed a general discussion regarding ways to promote the sale of EHD given the print date was now three years ago. It was suggested that Bracelands, the café at Symonds Yat Rock, Speech House and Shire Hall in Monmouth might be additional outlets. Jackie reported that the next edition of Walk Magazine would feature a walk which included The Kymin and she had asked the Editor to include reference to EHD in the feature. She also reported on her links with Coleford Tourist Information Office and the fact that Coleford was seeking “Walkers are Welcome” status, adding that she hoped this might be an avenue for selling more books. Further ideas and offers of practical help from members by linking with a specific outlet would be most welcome.

**4. FOOTPATHS OFFICER REPORT:** John Baker presented his report on his third year in post, referring to 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. He stated there remained at county level a consistent number of outstanding footpath repair and maintenance jobs with a current total of 128. Each month some 40 to 50 jobs are completed. Over the past year he had reviewed some 60 planning applications, looking specifically at impact on PROWs. He had objected to 5 proposals and raised concerns in another 4 cases. In addition he had reviewed 7 GCC footpath modifications, none of which had cause for concern.

Notable issues throughout the year included the proposed extension to Clearwell Quarry and illegal alterations to footpaths at Tintern Quarry.

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. The level of support was very pleasing which resulted in our Group consistently offering around 30 walking opportunities in each of the three programmes. 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 remained stable at 202 at the end of September 2019. The broad picture was that there had been 17 new members over the course of the year. Of the members leaving, most were due to lapsed membership payment or resignations from the Ramblers organization. Sadly, 2 of our members had passed away.

**7. UPDATE FROM WEBMASTER:** Malcolm Shergold informed members of the improvements made to the website over recent months. A facility had been added for walk leaders to issue

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notice of cancellation of their walk in the event of adverse weather, flooding etc. Although cancellations were rare, this facility streamlined the process and did not rely on the availability of the Membership Secretary to get the message out. He had moved from using OS Open Spaces to using Bing which provided the added value of satellite and/or street view. Finally he had developed a facility for uploading walk routes as GPX files which walk leaders could do on a voluntary basis. These routes would be added to the “history” section thereby further developing our reference library.

Looking forward, Malcolm planned to develop a route planner similar to the one on North & Mid Cheshire’s website (which he knew many of our members used) but with additional features. He also planned to make grid reference identification much easier.

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

## 8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

**Bernie Gill took the Chair for this item until the new Chair for 2019/20 was elected**

<b>Position:</b>	<b>Nominee:</b>	<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Seconded by:</b>	<b>Voted:</b>
Chair	Peter Robbins	Ian Walding	Alan Fisher	unanimously
Secretary	Jackie Huck	Carol Baker	Jenny Robbins	unanimously
Treasurer	Ronnie Walker	Jackie Huck	Pam Cullis	unanimously
Membership	Lynn Stockley and Ann Linden	Barbara Fisher	Pam Edwards	unanimously
Footpaths (FoD area and committee member)	John Baker	Peter Robbins	Malcolm Shergold	unanimously
Footpaths (Cross Border)	Jenny Robbins	Peter Robbins	Jackie Huck	unanimously
Publicity	vacancy			
Walks coordinator	Ian Walding	John Bevan	Maurice Cullis	unanimously
Webmaster	Malcolm Shergold with Julian Watson as Deputy	Ronald Walker	Jackie Huck	unanimously
Committee members	John Bevan Sue Marshall	John Baker Peter Robbins	Derek Sheppard Carol Baker	unanimously
Newsletter Editor	Ronnie Walker	Pam Cullis	Ian Walding	unanimously
Area	Adrian Probert	Ronald Walker	Jackie Huck	unanimously

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Representative				
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**9. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR:** Alan Fisher was appointed independent auditor for 2019/20

**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. Specifically, Area had worked with CO to establish an approach to the requirements of the GDPR as best fits small, voluntarily run Groups. He also updated the meeting on Area’s work in relation to the proposed road network changes at the Air Balloon on the A417 which impacted on the Cotswold Way, Gloucestershire Way and other local footpath networks.

Bernie concluded by congratulating the FoD Group for being active in promoting walking and protecting PROWs.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Confirmed:.....

Date:.....

