

**EAST BERKSHIRE GROUP OF THE RAMBLERS**  
***Minutes of the 46th Annual General Meeting***

**7.30pm FRIDAY 11th NOVEMBER 2016**

Claire's Court School, Ray Mill Road East, Maidenhead, Berkshire

The Group Chairman, David Bailey, opened the meeting by advising members of the recent, unexpected death of Margaret Bowdery, Life President and founder of East Berkshire Ramblers (EBR). No details of funeral arrangements were yet available but these would be posted to the EBR website in due course. A minute's silence was held in memory of Margaret and in recognition of all her work for the Group and The Ramblers in general over very many years.

Copies of the Agenda and 2015/16 Financial Report were available for those members present to read. Details of, and reports from, the 2015 Annual General Meeting had been published in the December 2015 edition of the Group Newsletter. The official report of the 2015 Annual General Meeting had been available to read on the EBR website prior to the Meeting and a few copies were available to read at the Meeting itself.

**1. Apologies for absence**

A total of 61 members signed the register and a list of these is given in Appendix 1 to these minutes. Apologies were received from Jenny Cooper, Sven & Hazel Fossgard, Steve Gillions, Eleanor Griffiths, Rob Latham, Anne & Arthur Lewis, Roger Norton, Jill Powell, Belinda Thornhill and Viv Williams

**2. Minutes of the 45th Annual General Meeting of 20th November 2015**

There were no corrections necessary and the Minutes were approved as a true record of the Meeting (*Proposed by: Peter London and seconded by Pera Marrs*).

**3. Chairman's Annual Report (Group Annual Report):**

The Group Chairman, David Bailey, read the Group Annual report as follows:

This is my fourth Annual Report as EBR Chairman – it covers the twelve months November 2015 to November 2016. Following the usual pattern it will start with a few words about the committee.

Firstly then, **the Committee**. There were a number of changes at last year's AGM and I'm pleased to say that things have remained stable since then, no-one having left and no need for any co-options. Every year, when I present the Annual Report, and particularly when talking about the different Group activities, I find myself thanking a lot of individual people. But I'm not sure that I've previously put enough emphasis on the importance of the input made by all members of the committee collectively; that's to say the importance of them working well together as a team. I think this Group does exceptionally well at this and I'm sure it's a major factor in East Berks having again had a very successful year in all areas of our activities. So I'd like to include in this year's Annual Report a personal thank you to all my committee colleagues.

**Group Membership**. I reported last year that membership had stabilised at around 430. Well, again it's changed hardly at all this year. We're not out of step with the national trend, and certainly not with our neighbouring local groups in the rest of Berkshire. The important thing is that we are continuing to attract new members – we see this every four months when the Group Newsletter invariably shows a dozen or so new names – but obviously a similar number must be dropping off at the other end. Of course there will be unavoidable reasons for some of those we are losing. But of course we can all help with this effort to keep membership levels up. When talking with your friends, family, neighbours, talk to them about the enjoyment *you* get out of Ramblers, and see if you can recruit a few more that way.

That brings me neatly on to our **Walking** and other **Activities**. Again, well over 200 walks this year, with the now usual range of longer and shorter, moderate and leisurely. Walks on Sundays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, plus the increasingly popular strollathons - about once a month usually on a Thursday. Now, I'm told that Pera and Viv are frequently asked why there aren't more leisurely-paced walks on the programmes. Well, of course they'll put as many walks of any description on the programme as you like, but they can only do this if they have volunteers to lead them. So, if you want more leisurely walks or walks of any description – I'm afraid that's the only way you're going to get them, volunteer to lead 'em!

Moving on swiftly. The long-distance coach-walk this year has been the Cotswold Way, and very successful it's been too. And it's not finished yet. We do this on the first Wednesday of each month during the summer season, so we called a halt after the October leg and will be starting up again in April where we left off, with 2 (or 3) more stages to go.

**Saturday Coach Trips**. Many thanks again to Eve for organising the two Saturday coach trips this year; the first to Petworth in June, the other to Arundel in August. Both very successful. I think these coach trips are pretty valuable events to have in our programme as they provide not only an opportunity for our regular walkers to be able to walk in a slightly different bit of countryside than on our usual weekly walks, but also because of the chance they give for some of our less active members to still get out with the Group, with all the social benefits that brings, and hopefully spend a relatively relaxing day at an interesting NT location or other place of interest.

**Other Walking Activities**. In concluding what I'd wanted to say about the Group's walking activities can I just add that I believe we've contributed to Central Office's various "festival" type events this year, that is the Festival of Winter Walking and the Walk About Festival in September. In addition, we were involved by contributing walks to the RBWM's programmes of "Fit for Life" activities – a very worthwhile initiative, I think, aimed at getting those residents of the borough leading a more sedentary-type lifestyle, more active. And, importantly this year, we volunteered our services by joining in and indeed leading the Thames Path Baton Relay when it passed through our patch between Marlow and Windsor on 18<sup>th</sup> July celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Thames Path National Trail.

**Group Holidays.** Three Group holidays again this year. 38 members went for four nights to the HF House in Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire, at the end of April. This differed from the Group's recent HF holidays in that we hired HF leaders rather than use our own members to lead the walks. This was mainly because we now have fewer members who feel able to commit to being able to lead; but also – isn't it only fair that all our people should be entitled to enjoy their break like the rest of us, rather than have to work and take on this very considerable responsibility? 18 went to Schladming in Austria for a week with Secret Hills in July, and then 34 spent four nights in Sidmouth, again with Secret Hills in mid-September. All three holidays were reported to have been a great success so a big thank you to the organisers, Arthur Holland (Bourton), John Payne (Schladming) – I can't remember who organised the Sidmouth trip!

Just one other thing to mention on the Bourton trip. A number of questions I believe have been asked about the calculation of the refunds which were made for those on this holiday. If you still have questions Arthur is the person who can provide the answers.

Moving on to the **Shows and Events** we've attended this year. We've taken our Publicity Stand to the Nicholson's Shopping Centre in Maidenhead, to Hurley Regatta, Datchet Fair, the Littlewick Show, Cookham Regatta, Eton Fair, and the Combined Charities Fair, at all of which Eve and her loyal team of volunteer helpers have done a tremendous job in talking to the public (including the Prime Minister whom I think has visited twice) about the health and social benefits of walking and – perhaps more specifically – the benefits of joining Ramblers. They also sold quite a lot of our books and maps – but more about our publications later.

The Shows and Events are, I suppose, the main thrust of our **Publicity** activity, but linked to that I'd just like to mention something else we've done this year, which I don't think we've done before, at least not in recent years – we've given a couple of talks about the Ramblers and what Ramblers do. The first was to a meeting of the Bisham Parish Council, and the second was to one of the social groups linked to the Maidenhead URC (for those that don't know, our link with the URC is that we use a room in their premises for our bi-monthly committee meetings.) Thank you Pera for your help on both those occasions.

**Social Events** this year, for which we again have to thank Pauline Thompson have included the traditional pre-Christmas Party, a Skittles Evening in February (and thanks also to Jean for her support with that, as it coincided with Pauline's indisposition), a mid-summer evening picnic in Braywick Park, and a return visit to Combermere Barracks in October. All very successful, thank you Pauline. And of course we mustn't forget the also very successful New Year Lunch at WHGC which Alma organised. Thanks Alma. (Cue for a commercial – tickets for the Christmas Social and for the NY Lunch will be available at the back of the hall later.)

And whilst I'm talking about social events this is perhaps an appropriate point to mention the Garden Party which the committee hosted in July for our very hard-working team of footpath wardens, to say a big "thank you" to them for all they do.

The **EBR Golf Society** (submitted by Meg Knight ) has had a really good year, with four meetings and no rain! 12 members enjoyed a team Scramble at Farnham Park in April, and we had a turnout of 12 again for our second fixture at Billingbear in June. Our third day was at Bird Hills in August followed by Richings Park in September where 16 of us played for the various club trophies. The winner of the Claret Jug was Alan Harding. Hilde Jackson was the first lady and won the Shirley Morgan Cup. The Rumblers trophy was won by Peter London.

(Meg adds) I hope to organise similar dates next year but will vary the days as Fridays do not suit everyone. As always we would really welcome more members of any standard. Anyone interested should e-mail me. The Chairman has Meg's email details if you need them.

**Conclusion** So, as you'll have gathered, and as I said at the beginning of this report, another successful year for EBR. But apart from what I've talked about there has also been a lot of "behind the scenes" work going on this year – much of it related to what you'll remember we discussed at last year's AGM, particularly the future of the RfP publications, and also the work to try to put to good use the very significant accumulated funds we hold, both locally and in our Endowment Fund at Central Office. Funds largely generated over the years from the sale of these publications.

Well, RfP In East Berkshire (the green book) has been completely updated by a dedicated team of volunteers from within the Group, following a thorough checking of every word, map, coma and hyphen, and is on the point of being re-printed and re-published. We had hoped the new edition would have been ready for a launch this evening, but unfortunately a last minute delay at the printers has made this impossible. However, work is already well in hand to do the same for the blue book – RfP "Along the Thames". Thanks to all those who have put, and are putting so much work into these mammoth tasks – especially to Steve Gillions who has been co-ordinating everybody's efforts as well as undertaking a huge chunk of the work himself.

So hopefully we will continue to retain a steady income from the sale of these excellent publications. Meetings and on-going communications have been taking place throughout the year with Ramblers Central Office, with our partner groups in Berkshire Area, and with other bodies concerning the uses to which these accumulated funds can most appropriately and beneficially be put. We will keep you updated on this.

EBR has had an extremely busy and active year but by far the most significant event was the very sad loss, just 7 days ago, of the Group's Life President, Margaret Bowdery.

But you've heard enough from me, I'm going to stop there and I'll leave you to hear more about this in the reports which will follow from your Treasurer, Alan Harding, and Footpath Secretary, Steve Gillions. (In Steve's absence his report is going to be read to you this evening by our Group Secretary, Liz Richardson. Steve's asked me specifically to thank Liz for doing that.)

Thank you everyone.

No questions were raised on the Chairman's report and the report was duly approved. (*Proposed by: Norman Iley, Seconded by: Peter Griffiths*)

#### 4. Group Honorary Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer had circulated a copy of the 2015/16 accounts with the AGM Agenda. These accounts are attached to these minutes (Appendix 2). Noteworthy matters were as follows:

- Income from publications was down on 2015 because some titles are not available; some receipts from shows -£500- had come in after yearend; and the wholesaler was a quarter behind in reporting sales. These were not of concern. The value of stock was further reduced.
- Footpath work costs are accelerating as the RBWM tackle the 'gates for stiles' list which EBR is supporting at 50% of cost
- Self-funded activities had been properly self-financing
- The deficit increased to £1,616 but given the above explanations this is acceptable.
- The cash balance is a very healthy £28,206

In answer to questions, the Treasurer explained:

- the Rambling for Pleasure series will in future be published by our wholesaler, not by EBR; he will be printing the titles and pay a commission to the EBR. When EBR require stocks – for example to sell on the stall – they will be bought at wholesale price.
- the EBR Endowment Fund held at Central Office has been increased to £42,000 with the addition of accumulated interest and it will be spent on projects, not administrative costs, and only after agreement from EBR.

The Treasurer's report was duly approved. (*Proposed by: Jean Todd. Secoded by:Gerald Barnett*)

#### 5. Footpath Secretary's Report

In the absence of the Footpath Secretary, the Secretary presented his report as follows:

Due to a long-standing prior engagement I am unfortunately unable to attend the AGM this year, so to all of you I offer my apologies and to Liz I offer my thanks for reading out my report. If you have any questions at all you would like to raise directly with me, please don't hesitate to get in touch by phone or email.

I must first thank all the volunteers who keep a watchful eye on our footpaths and other rights of way, and especially the Footpath Wardens who also carry out the twice yearly footpath surveys. Special thanks to the two who are retiring – Dick Bedford and David Spencer. The Big Pathwatch survey, of which more later, showed that the rights of way network in the Borough is in a good state of repair and this is due in large part to the efforts and vigilance of our members.

A significant development during the year was the Borough's decision to gate part of Eton FP 51 as a result of pressure from a residents group concerning late night anti-social behaviour. East Berks Ramblers, Windsor Ramblers and others objected to the closure, particularly since FP 51 was established as part of the planning permission for the riverside residential accommodation where the complainants live. Although the hours of closure are limited – between 10pm and 5am – and only a very short stretch of path is affected, this is an unfortunate precedent and we should be very wary of similar approaches from other occupants of 'gated communities' who seek to limit public facilities for their own convenience.

There have been a number of other specific rights of way issues.

A minor diversion to Hurley FP 18 where it passes through Berkshire College of Agriculture has been formally agreed. We supported the proposal as we think it provides an improved route and better views than the original line. BCA has agreed to ensure clear signage.

Last year I reported that changes to the footpath network between Mount Farm and Malders Lane (Cookham FP's 17, 21 and 19) had been proposed by the landowner. We and others, including Cookham Parish Council and the Cookham Society, objected to the changes but they remain on the table at the time of writing. We will continue to argue for the status quo.

We understand informally that a diversion of part of Maidenhead FP 19 may be sought by the landowner. The path is part of the Green Way East in North Maidenhead and we will keep a close watching brief on this in view of past difficulties in this area and the need to safeguard the Green Way itself.

A number of complaints were received in respect of footpath issues, and the Borough's Rights of Way team generally responded well. Cox Green FP 10 south of Thrift Wood was perhaps the most significant where the path was made impassable due to turf cutting and subsequent flooding. The Borough agreed a recovery plan with the landowner and an action plan to prevent any recurrence.

The Big Pathwatch exercise organised nationally by the Ramblers finished in December last year. Many thanks to those of you who submitted returns on the footpaths on our patch. Our results were very good, and the Ramblers decided to use the Borough as a national case study. In total, 87% of our grid squares were checked, and 79% of them were considered to be well-kept. This was considerably better than the South East as a whole. We received some good publicity on this in the Maidenhead Advertiser. The Ramblers intend to publish their Pathwatch national action plan shortly.

I have continued to represent East Berks Ramblers on the Thames Flood Relief Discussion Forum and this year have become a member of the Local Access Forum alongside Gordon Marrs.

Many of you will be familiar with the 'Green' and 'Blue' Rambling for Pleasure books devised and written by Dave Ramm and David Bounds. They generously bequeathed the copyright on these to East Berks Ramblers and we have profited considerably over the years from the excellent sales figures. Stocks are now very low and over the last year we have been revising and updating both

books. The Green Book is now with the printers and should be available very soon. Work on the Blue Book is well advanced and I am hopeful of publishing early in the New Year, subject to the printer's schedule.

My thanks to all those who have checked out the walks – in all weathers. And to all of you here who are going to buy the books as soon as they are available.

Finally, my thanks to all committee members for their advice, support and patience throughout the year. And yes, the date of next year's AGM is already inked in my diary!"

The Footpaths Secretary's report was duly approved. (*Proposed by: Dave Ramm, Seconded by: Neil Adamson*).

The Treasurer said that the very good state of repair of the Group's footpaths was an incredible testament to the work of Margaret Bowdery. The Chairman added that EBR's area would not have been recorded as one of the best in the country from the Big Pathwatch project without Margaret.

## **6. Election of Officers**

The Chairman reported that during the year, there had been no new members co-opted on to the Committee

The Chairman advised that Eve Norton would be retiring from the Committee at the closure of the AGM and, for the time being, her role as Shows Organiser and Coach walks Organiser would be assumed by other members of the Committee.

A nomination had been received for Peter Griffiths to be appointed as a General Committee member. (*Proposed by Liz Richardson. Seconded by Rosemary Davies*). Mr Griffiths's appointment was duly approved.

All other Committee members were to retire at the AGM.

Gordon Marrs assumed the Chair for the appointment of the Chairman. It was proposed by Roy Gardiner and seconded by Helen London that David Bailey be re-appointed Chairman, Publicity Officer & UK Autumn Holiday organiser. The appointment was duly approved.

Mr Bailey resumed as Chairman.

Those named below were available for re-election in the stated posts:-

Vice Chairman/Planning & Countryside Officer	(Gordon Marrs)
Honorary Treasurer	(Alan Harding)
Membership Secretary & Recruitment Contact	(Neil Adamson)
Social Secretary	(Pauline Thompson)
Walks Organiser & Longer Walks Coordinator	(Pera Marrs)
UK Spring Holiday organiser	(Arthur Holland)
Webmaster	(Mike Taylor)
Newsletter Editor	(Eileen Dorney)
Footpaths Secretary	(Steve Gillions)
Group Secretary	(Liz Richardson)
General Committee member	(Rosemary Davies)
Shorter Walks representative	(Frank Bush)

It was proposed by Jean Todd and seconded by Peter Griffiths that the above be reappointed en-bloc. This proposal was accepted and the appointments were duly approved.

Four non-Committee positions were filled by volunteers as follows:

Working Party Organiser	(Andrew Jeffery)
Foreign Holiday Organiser	(John Payne)
Walks Reports Coordinator	(Alma Richardson)
Shorter walks Coordinator	(Viv Williams)

## **7. Appointment of an Independent Examiner of the Group's Accounts**

It was proposed by Gordon Marrs and seconded by David Bailey that David Moore of 37 Derwent Drive, Maidenhead, SL6 6LE be re-appointed as Independent Examiner. Mr Moore was duly elected.

## **8. Group representative on the Area Committee**

It was proposed by Gerald Barnett and seconded by Alan Harding that David Bailey continue in this position (with support from other members as necessary). Mr Bailey was duly elected.

## **9. Question and Answer Session**

Dave Ramm read out to members an email he had received from Margaret Bowdery's son advising of her sudden death. It was noted that she had been EBR's footpath secretary for 43 years.

Malcolm Stone asked about the financial arrangements relating to the new RfP publications. The Treasurer responded that EBR would receive a commission when the books were printed (an amount per book). When EBR bought the books from the publisher, this would be at the wholesaler rate of £4 per book (RRP £7.99). With the increase in use of e-books, this new arrangement with the publisher – less risky but still profitable - had been considered appropriate for EBR.

Jean Todd asked if excess funds held by EBR could be used to give something back to members. The Treasurer replied that he did not think this would be allowed or appropriate, given EBR's charitable status.

Jean Todd also requested consideration be given to using a microphone for speakers at future AGMs as it was understood difficulty in hearing had been experienced by some members during the course of the meeting. The Committee agreed to take this into consideration.

Pera Marrs requested that walks be forthcoming for the next walks programme particularly for late February and March. No Sunday walks had yet been provided for April. It was understood that Viv Williams was also experiencing difficulties in finding leaders for both moderate and leisurely short walks.

Pauline Thompson advised the Christmas Social would be held on Saturday 10th December and help would be most welcome from 6:15 onwards to help set up the hall.

Chris Roper asked that consideration be given to supporting the "Children in Need" charity in two years' time by an organised ramble to raise funds and she volunteered to organise this. The Committee agreed to consider this after checking whether there were any complications as a result of one charity (The Ramblers) supporting another.

#### **10. Presentation to Eve Norton**

The Chairman made a short presentation to Eve Norton thanking her for her seven years' work on the Committee. He presented her with a bowl of tete-a-tete daffodils and a M&S voucher. Eve responded that she had enjoyed her time on the Committee and offered especial thanks to Malcom Stone and Brenda Horner for their help over the years promoting The Ramblers at the shows attended by EBR.

#### **11. Any other business**

There was none.

As there was no further business, the Chairman closed the formal business at approximately 8.45pm.

#### **12. Cheese and Wine**

Following the formal meeting members enjoyed complimentary cheeses, paté, biscuits, fruit juices and wines, as well as the chance to socialise and view the Group's display screens.

# APPENDIX 1

Members attending the East Berkshire Ramblers' Group Annual General Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016

Diane	Adamson	Norman	Iley
Neil	Adamson	Hilde	Jackson
David	Bailey	Andrew	Jeffery
Patrick	Bailey	Derek	Johnson
Jutta	Banerji	Helen	London
Gerald	Barnett	Peter	London
Sheila	Barnett	Janet	Mangold
Jack	Bennett	Gordon	Marrs
Margaret	Burke	Pera	Marrs
Thomas	Burke	Eve	Norton
Frank	Bush	John	Payne
Mavis	Bush	Dave	Ramm
Paul	Castle	Alma	Richardson
Peter	Cooper	Liz	Richardson
Rosemary	Davies	Richard	Roberts
Ann	Dennis	Chris	Roper
Andrea	Doolan	Nigel	Roper
Eileen	Dorney	John	Sainsbury
Judith	Edwards	Kathleen	Smith
Roger	Edwards	Malcolm	Stone
Babs	Fort	Cilla	Taylor
Roy	Gardiner	Mike	Taylor
Alex	Goodlet	Pauline	Thompson
Janet	Goodlet	Don	Todd
Stella	Granby	Jean	Todd
Peter	Griffiths	John	Vint
Tony	Hatch	Peggy	Vint
Arthur	Holland	Margaret	Welsford
Brian	Hunt	Mary	Williams
Joyce	Hunt	Juliet	Witcher
Diane	Iley		

## APPENDIX 2

### The Ramblers Association – East Berks Group

#### Receipts and Payments Account for the Year October 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2016

2015	Receipts	2016	2015	Payments	2016
	<b>Main</b>			<b>Main</b>	
	Grant from C O /Area		30	Walks: leader training	10
90	Donations	350	1323	Walks programme & newsletter	1263
28	Bank Interest	24		Publication costs	60
3684	Publications sales	1736		Campaigns/casework	
290	Advertising	40	826	Practical footpath work	911
	Grant -footpath work	1000	146	Meeting Ex'es inc. AGM	367
45	Associate members	36	560	Admin	253
	Other		40	Other, inc. donation	65
<b>4137</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>3187</b>	<b>2925</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2929</b>
	<b>Self-funded</b>			<b>Self-funded</b>	
5237	Day coach walks	4046	6519	Day coach walks	4502
24182	Holidays	28482	24251	Holidays	28556
1394	Social events	1735	412	Social events	1711
	Other			Other	
<b>30813</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>34263</b>	<b>31182</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>34769</b>
			956	Cost of sales from stock	491
			902	Reduction in price of stock	877
			(1015)	<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	(1616)
<b>34950</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37450</b>	<b>34950</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37450</b>

#### Balance Sheet at September 30<sup>th</sup> 2016

2015	Assets	2016	2015	Liabilities	2016
28454	Bank Balance	28206	31185	Prior Year Balance 1 <sup>st</sup> October	30170
-	Cash in hand	-	(1015)	Surplus (deficit) for year	(1616)
1716	Stock of publications	348			
<b>30170</b>	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>28554</b>	<b>30170</b>	<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>28554</b>

Prepared by A D Harding, Honorary Treasurer, East Berks Ramblers Group

19<sup>th</sup> October, 2016

#### Independent Examiner's Report

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group independent examination guidelines, I consider the East Berks Ramblers' accounts to have been properly prepared and to give a true and fair view of the Group's finances for the year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016, and the balance sheet at that date.

Signed:

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2016

Mr D Moore, 37 Derwent Drive, Maidenhead, Berks