

Reports from retiring Officers for the year October 2009 to September 2010

1 Chairman

During the last 3 years positive goals have been achieved:

- ❑ An excellent new website was built and kept up to date by Ken Mill.
- ❑ The walks programme is varied, and was taken on by Joy at last year's AGM.
- ❑ Regular advertising was set up from scratch by Jill Field and successfully taken over by Heather who continues to build the groups profile.
- ❑ There is now good relationship between the Group Footpaths Secretaries, Jenny and John, and the County Council, which enables them to prioritise footpath repairs and clearances.
- ❑ Electronic mailing was introduced by Jean, to which she has dedicated a lot of time and effort, continues to grow. This saves Group resources.
- ❑ There is now an accurate membership database, which Jean monitors carefully and now that the new membership system at central office is working more efficiently, we can see that our membership is now growing steadily.
- ❑ Walks numbers have risen substantially, and the Friday ambles, which were originally started by Jenny and John and are now under the guidance of Jean and Chris, continue to attract regular and new walkers.

The Committee, all volunteers, put in a lot of time and effort, so on behalf of all Severnside Group members I would like to thank them all. I would also like to thank all the Group members that have supported me over the last three years and I wish Severnside all the best for a long and successful future.

Jill Fysh, Group Chairman

2 Secretary & Membership Secretary

Membership

The new membership database is working much better than at this time last year and the membership figures are more reliable. The membership numbers that are reported by Ramblers Central Office each month include:

- ❑ Active Members: ie those who have paid their membership fee and it these that are reported to the Committee.
- ❑ Those members who are due to renew their membership but who have not done so for three months after the due date are classified as Payment Pending – they are not included in the headcount but continue to receive our walks programme, Walk Magazine etc.
- ❑ There are those members who have not renewed their membership by the end of the 15th month and these are classed as Lapsed. These people receive no benefits so do not receive the walks programme etc.

Membership was 177 at the end of September 2010 – the same number as at the end of September 2009. There were 8 people in the Payment Pending category at the end of September.

Although the total number has not changed since 2009 we had 36 new members join the Group over the past 12 months. 26 members left or transferred out. The difference is made up of those members who either do not renew their membership and who 'drop off' the list as 'lapsed'.

Electronic Programme

The sign up for the electronic programme has been slow but progress is being made. I now send out 54 e-programmes and AAN which covers 68 members. 118 members still receive the programme in paper form which allowing for joint membership means 93 programmes are still being sent out by post. When a new member has an email address they are assumed to be willing to receive the e-programme unless they advise me to the contrary.

Records

At a recent meeting of the Committee it was agreed that the Group's records such as Agenda, Minutes, Officers Reports, correspondence etc would be kept electronically. Older documents currently held only in hard copy will be

scanned. Copies of correspondence are already kept in electronic format only. Documents such as Agenda, Minutes and Officers' Reports are currently held both in hard copy and electronically and in due course only a rolling 12 months of hard copy will be retained. This has been cleared with Ramblers Central Office who agreed that this will facilitate the handover of records to a new Secretary – whoever that may be.

Given this recent agreement about records, I am prepared to stand for re-election to the Committee for a further year so that I can set up the electronic records.

Jean Aellen, Secretary & Membership Secretary

3 Treasurer

Income

Ramblers Holidays continued to give us a much needed £50 for their advert in our quarterly newsletter. There was a reduction in our quarterly allocation from Central Office. This is hopefully going to go back up again next year. Bank interest was almost nothing, as expected. A donation was received from the Minehead Trip.

Expenditure

Due mostly to an increasing number of members receiving their quarterly programme by email, printing and distribution costs were down. Due to Ramblers redesigning their logo, stationery bearing this had to be purchased. The Group is hosting the Area AGM next year (2011) so a deposit for the hall was required.

Social Events included the recent Elan Valley weekend. This was unfortunately run at a loss because there was no administration charge added to the overall cost and prizes for the riotous quiz evening and beetle drive were paid for from the Social Fund. A skittles evening was held in the autumn (2009), and a quiz evening in the spring, producing a profit with the help of the raffles.

The Christmas meal in 2009 was self-financing.

£95 was transferred from the Social Fund to the Group Account to cover increased expenditure.

Sylvi Garratt, Group Treasurer

4 Joint Footpath Secretaries

We have continued to liaise with the Area Footpaths Officers and the South Glos Public Rights of Way team. In recent months we have been allowed to submit two problems as Priority cases to South Glos which, if they fulfil certain criteria, will definitely be dealt with within three months. As a result problems on the Jubilee Way near Thornbury Leisure Centre were dealt with on the Friday before Jill Field was leading her walk there on the following Sunday.

Early in 2010 we surveyed the parish of Falfield and found that it had been well looked after in the past but had no parish footpaths warden now. We sent a relatively short list of the problems we found to the parish council and to South Glos, and as a result Falfield Parish Council are still trying to appoint a parish footpaths warden. More recently we have turned our attention to the parish of Pilning and Severn Beach and have submitted problems around the new Tesco Distribution Centre as a priority case to be dealt with by South Glos. Throughout our Severnside parishes, which generally lie to the west of South Gloucestershire, we keep an eye on footpaths where we have had problems reported or supposedly been dealt with.

We have not done any real footpath clearances this year although we did clear a few stiles as we surveyed Falfield parish and did have a go at the overgrown section of the Jubilee Way mentioned above. South Glos seem to prefer to use contractors and when they cleared the Jubilee Way sections, presumably with machines, it looked like a motorway had been carved through the undergrowth so it would stay clear a lot longer than from any manual efforts. With the financial cutbacks it will be interesting to see if S Glos will be more open to offers of help that we and several other rambling groups have made.

The public rights of way situation in our area has generally been improving over recent years so we will do all we can to help keep things going in that direction.

Jenny Aspinall & John Lewis, Joint Footpath Secretaries

5 Publicity Officer

Our walks are reported weekly in the Weekender section of the free newspaper Bristol Observer.

Our monthly programmes are printed in 7 local magazines. Occasionally there is no space for a table of walks to be included and this is replaced by a short article advising the reader to access information from our website or the library programmes.

The library programmes are free leaflets detailing walks led by our members. They are printed on distinctive yellow paper, are distributed to about ten libraries and show 6 weeks of walks. (Members programmes show 12 weeks)

To attract new members, posters are displayed at regular intervals and information about special events is sent to the local press. Twice in the last year we have been approached by HTV, but we have yet to make it to the small screen.

I have tried to gauge the success of this publicity. Certainly the Observer and some of the local magazines have attracted new-comers, and members from other groups. I believe it is worthwhile to keep a raised profile of our Group.

In September I attended an excellent course run by Ramblers for publicity officers. It was useful to talk to other publicity officers and to have guidance from headquarters. I think we are doing well at Severnside!

Heather Rickards, Group Publicity Officer

6 Webmaster

- ❑ Grateful to all photographers for their photo contributions to the site. This is one of the most popular sections of the site.
- ❑ Photos are hosted via Photobucket which is separate from the Severnside site to avoid filling up my hard-drive and also to ease the time taken to load pages within the Severnside site.
- ❑ The free space within Photobucket is almost full so I will create another free account and continue with a new Severnside album. The links to the existing album will be maintained.
- ❑ The site attracts a regular number of visitors and over the last year there have been a total of 3971 visits to the site.
- ❑ In the last month there have been 179 returning visitors and 149 new visitors to the site.
- ❑ The hosting of the site has remained with 123-Reg over the last year and there have been very few problems to report. The reliability of hosting is a key factor in keeping the site running.
- ❑ Always interested in feedback and of any news items for the site.

Ken Mill, Webmaster

7 Walk Programme Co-Ordinator

We have a few new walk leaders and hope to have some more soon after the recent compass and map reading course – always welcome – every walk of any length makes a difference.

Thank you to everyone who puts walks on our comprehensive programme and this includes those who do the pre-walks who may feel unsung heroes. All walks are pre-walked at least once and often more, but please remember things can change at very short notice. Constructive comments are welcome.

In addition to the normal Friday and Sunday programme we look to having about one Saturday walk a month, one short Sunday alternative walk, and one or two evening walks in the summer.

I have started a database of walk leaders – please return the forms- for my and your benefit. I am also doing a spreadsheet of walk attendees for short, medium and long walks and each one has an average 14-18.

Please submit walks by the closing date so that gaps can be overcome and the programme prepared in time for the ensuing committee meeting. This includes those who can no longer do a walk or change a date. Walks that have to be cancelled at short notice or because of extreme weather conditions will appear on the website.

Joy Harrison, Walk Co-ordinator