

SevernSide Ramblers Group

AGM – Sunday 22 November 2009

Officers' Reports

1 Chairman

Severnside have had a good year with a good number of walks offered and most were well attended.

We introduced the shorter Sunday walks, which take place about once a month. This was requested at last year's AGM and these have been very successful with more than an average turn out of walkers.

The Friday Ambles continue to flourish and the monthly Saturday walks are also still, very well supported.

Of course without walk leaders there would be no walks, so I would like to say 'Thank you' to every one who has led a walk this year, please continue to do so.

We had a new website created by Ken Mill who keeps it up to date with the latest group information.

Socially, Severnside has been more active during this year, with a successful Christmas Lunch, which was a sell out, arranged by Gill King; a Bideford Weekend that attracted 28 people, arranged by Jenny and John who also led the walks and arranged evening activities to ensure everyone had a full and enjoyable time. A fund-raising Quiz night was hosted by Gill and Chris Roberts. Also a fund-raising skittles evening, not only hosted by Chris Everett and Andy but they also had a clean sweep and won both Games.

Many thanks to all the above for these events, and for their dedication to Severnside. A special thank you to Chris who donated her skittles winnings to Group funds.

The Festival of Winter Walks, the non members walk and the Get Walking Day walk all boasted an exceptional turn out, and will be difficult to match this year, but we will give it a go.

Many people have joined us on our walks, these included new walkers, people from other Ramblers groups, including the Isle of Wight, and a couple from Canada who were in Bristol for the birth of their second grandchild. They had walked with us three years ago when they were here for their first grandchild, we look forward to seeing them again when they return for the third.

Most, if not all of the people that joined our walks, either visiting or new walker/member, did so because of Jill Field's excellent advertising, which she built from scratch over 18 months. Unfortunately Jill has now retired from our committee to further her education in her career. I am sure every one joins me in saying 'Thank You Jill for your enthusiasm, hard work and dedication to Severnside, and we wish you well in your studies'.

All of the committee members have taken on roles and done them in a professional and efficient manner, and all of Severnside members join me in saying thank you to each of them.

Jill Fysh, Chairman

2 Secretary & Membership Secretary

I will deal with Membership first. The Group's membership at the end of September 2009 was 177, two more than last year. The central membership database continued to cause problems and whilst progress has been made by Ramblers' Central Office, the membership numbers have remained 'suspect'. During the year 39 new members joined and there were 22 resignations (including two deaths). Various members 'dropped off' the membership database and labels for the quarterly programme mailing because they were supposedly 'overdue' with payment of their membership fee; some members were transferred in / out in error. Some of the issues were resolved successfully but some remained a mystery. With the 'overdue' members who have disappeared from the mailing list I generally send them a programme for at least one quarter just in case there is either an error in the membership information, or the members have forgotten to renew. If I know the individuals concerned I mention to them their disappearance from the mailing list but I do not know everyone, and if they remain 'disappeared' for two quarters I stop sending the programme. Ramblers' Membership Team is due to re-start following up on 'overdue' members so hopefully things will improve soon. I certainly hope that by the time we get to next year's AGM all the problems will have been resolved and we will have accurate membership numbers.

Last year we introduced the option for members to receive the quarterly programme electronically. The number of members who receive the programme this way is now 36, and there are 40 others who receive the programme electronically (a mixture of members from other rambling groups and 'ad hoc' requests).

Jill has already mentioned Friday Ambles. On a couple of occasions a member described the Friday walks as 'a ladies' group'. It did seem like that at one time but that is certainly not the intention. We do now have several men who join Friday ambles on a regular basis and I would like to extend an invitation to them to contact me if they would be interested in leading the occasional Friday amble.

Jean Aellen, Secretary & Membership Secretary

3 Treasurer

Our funding allocation for 2008/2009 was the same as last year, but is probably going down by 25% this coming year as the Ramblers have serious financial problems. I submitted a budget for the next year three months ago but have not yet heard how much our allocation will be.

We continue to have £200 a year income from the Ramblers Holidays advert in our programme. Bank interest has gone right down due no doubt to the credit crunch.

Social events this year: Christmas Lunch and a weekend rambling in Bideford – were self-financing. The quiz evening made a profit of about £100 which is going towards buying tools for path clearing.

Our new website set up by Ken Mill cost nearly £50 and will cost about the same to maintain each year. Other expenditure was the purchase of a laminator and related materials to promote walking, along with a training day for Jill Field the Publicity Officer.

The AGM has actually cost about the same as last year, it depends when our chosen venue requires a deposit. Costs incurred for pre-walking were reimbursed and a gift was given to the leader of the map reading course.

Our costs for printing and posting the quarterly programme have increased – we are trying to get as many members as possible to receive it by email.

Sylvi Garratt, Treasurer

4 Footpath Secretaries

We continued our contact with Parish Footpath Warders, other Footpath Officers and Local Authority Field Officers. During the year efforts were concentrated on Tytherington where footpaths at one end of the parish had been badly neglected. New footpath signs were subsequently erected, kissing gates installed to replace unsafe stiles, and a small group carried out footpath clearance. An incident later occurred at one of the stiles that had been reported. Having reported the stile again it was replaced by a more easily accessible stile. Following liaison with the Walking for Health team, Tytherington was included in their programme of walks and this in turn meant some other stiles / gates were replaced promptly.

Direct online reporting to the Local Authority to a certain extent has taken us 'out of the loop', but we are still involved if problems are not resolved speedily.

Jenny Aspinall & John Lewis

5 Publicity Officer

Regular articles with simplified programme details are sent to five local 'free' magazines, namely: Bradley Stoke Matters (which also covers the 5 Stokes); 5 Villages Alive (Falfield, Tortworth, Tytherington, Rockhampton and Cromhall); Inview (Severn Beach); The Boundary (Chipping Sodbury); Thornbury Magazine.

Our tri-monthly basic information entry in the Patchway People has been ignored now on two occasions. There seems to be no way of contacting anyone from the publication.

Weekly entries are made to the Weekender page of the Bristol Observer. These include location, date, time, meeting place, short basic walk description and most importantly a contact number. I do not include any walk leader names in any of these entries.

When we had a themed walk or there was a national Ramblers event, appropriate posters were designed, printed and sent to all the libraries in our area and anywhere else that would take them.

Library programmes (LPs) are distributed to all local libraries every 6 weeks, (i.e. two LPs per main programme). Filton library kindly distributes them to the other libraries for us. Copies are no longer placed with Sainsbury's (Filton) as I discovered they were just left for staff to read and do not go on show to the public.

Good links have been established with South Glos 'Walking For Health'. I also wrote an article about the Ramblers and specifically our group, for their summer newsletter.

Although there was a lot more I could have done, I feel that the publicity I have been able to do has been successful. We have had lots of people interested enough to give walking a try and join us for at least one walk, resulting in some new members.

As this is my last report, thank you to everyone for your support over the last 18 months.

Jill Field, Publicity Officer

6 Web Editor

Severnside Website – www.severnside-ramblers.org.uk

Purpose:

Provide local information on walking

Promote charitable aims

To recruit new members

To give information to members

To promote our Group

Act as resource for committee members and volunteers

For a number of years this task has been undertaken very successfully by Geoff Mullett and he has set a high standard to be maintained. During 2008 Geoff decided it was time to call a halt to his support of Severnside website and the task to find a replacement was passed to Jill Fysh.

Jill in her usual fashion persuaded a “willing” volunteer to consider taking on this task. I was approached and my response was along the lines of ‘we need a Web Master but not me’. However, Jill won’t give up at the first hurdle and to cut a long story short I “volunteered” to take over from Geoff.

The task involved purchase of Web Design software, transfer of the Severnside domain name and setting up of a hosting service to allow the site to be accessible on the internet. The transfer was completed and a new site up and running at www.severnside-ramblers.org.uk

The assistance provided by Geoff during the transfer was invaluable and his help was very much appreciated.

I’ve never designed a website or even considered it was something I would like to do, but having taken on the responsibility, created a new site and published it on the internet it is a task that I find very rewarding. I’m very grateful for the information, photographs and help provided by Severnside Members who have contributed to the site.

So back to the purpose, if there are any news items, local information or events relevant to Severnside please forward details to webmaster@severnside-ramblers.org.uk and I will incorporate into the website.

Ken Mill, Web Editor

7 Walks Programme 2008/2009

This year we have put on a record number of walks which in the main were very well attended, and records of people attending a single walk were broken. This started with the walk from Clearwell led by Gill King, which boasted 36 ramblers. The Tortworth Snow Drops walk in February, the non member walking day, broke this record and had 52 walkers despite the cold and frost, but this record did not last for long because when the Bluebells showed their blooms David had a mammoth 56 people walking around Prior Woods.

We have a good number of walk leaders who put walks on the programme on a regular basis and others who can be called on if we need to fill in spaces on the walks programme; these include one or two regular walk leaders who are from other groups. However, we always manage to fill the walks programme and give a good variety of walks that cover a wide range of abilities; hence we try to please everyone, some of the time.

This year left us without a walk programme co-ordinator and despite advertising no one has come forward. Although I have done it for the past year, with support from Jean Aellen, I have found it very difficult to fit it in with other things I am involved with, and I would like someone to take it over, either in its present form or to redesign it. It is a very rewarding and important part of the group structure and whoever comes forward will need to have broadband access to the web site, and will be given all the help and support they need. So if you would like to give it a go, or know someone who would be interested, please contact either myself or Jean.

At the beginning of November there was a map and compass reading course led by Janet and Ken. This was a huge success with 16 people applying for the eight places. It was enjoyed by all who took part and everyone came away feeling that they had learned quite a lot, so we hope to run this again early next year.

Jill Fysh, Walks Programme Co-ordinator