

Warrington HF Ramblers
Minutes of 74th AGM – St Joseph's Parish Centre, Penketh
Tuesday 09 January 2024 8pm

1. Attendees and Apologies

31 present at the venue. 19 apologies were received

2. Minutes of the Previous AGM

Minutes of the previous AGM had been distributed via email.

Proposed as a true record by Jan Pritchard seconded by Craig Manchester

Matters Arising

None

3. Chairman's Address - Peter Winter

Welcome all. 2023 has been a great year for our club. Warrington HF Ramblers re-established itself in 2022, post covid, but 2023 saw us truly up and running with a very full programme and a healthy and renewed membership. Your committee will cover individual walk groups later in the agenda, but to highlight:

- 77 walks offered
- 2 weekends away
- A weeks holiday in Cyprus
- Spring and Autumn suppers
- Two Christmas walks and meals.
- 2 Club Nights
- 109 club members completed a walk, with 16 members doing over 20 walks.
Over 1200 walks completed.
- Also over 20 non-members came on walks; some as visitors, others trying us out...Cathy will discuss membership later

So how did we do all this? It is the collaborative and committed inputs by many that love walking and getting out into the fields and hills who make this all happen. You all make a contribution by just coming on a walk and enjoying it. There is a real buzz from setting a walk that is then enjoyed by many.

I had the pleasure to lead a mid-week evening walk on the summer solstice. 39 walkers around Grappenhall, just 5 miles, on a beautiful summer evening, with a drink outside the Rams Head afterwards....brilliant.

Whilst I will resist going through all of those who have gone over and above for our club, there are some special mentions required:

- Peter and Linda Hough, for the weekend at Llandridnod Wells, with 32 booked into the Hotel Metropole
- Cathy and Dennis Carter, with 50 booked onto the weekend in Northumbria
- Chris and Kathy Sewell and Cathy Carter for a smashing week in Cyprus
- Chris and Kathy Sewell, Wendy and Mike Hilton and Craig for offering us train rambles which added to the diversity and spread of our offering. In the case of Chris and Kathy we had a steam locomotive!

- Cathy and Dennis Carter for a Treasure Hunt ramble.
- In addition to coordinating the summer evening walks, Simon has done a fantastic job on the social front, including our forthcoming New Year Party, with, of course, our favourite Red River Band.
- Paul Burgess for the redevelopment of our web site to improve member recruitment.

Unfortunately Diane cannot be here this evening: we will pick up accounts later in the agenda, but crucially we are financially stable and the Committee has not been limited in its choices by cash availability. We have remained conscious of delivering value in the way the club is run. We have continued to make large savings on the publishing and distribution of the programme by producing it ourselves and printing it early so it can be distributed at walks and events.

I am pleased to announce that with careful financial management we are able to hold subs at £12 for 2024, but we are likely to need to increase subs for 2025.

Diane is stepping down from the treasurer role and I would like to sincerely thank her as an unsung hero for keeping us in financial order for the last three years. Before that Diane coordinated the weekend walks as well as setting up a new web site. We look forward to seeing Diane and Keisha on the trails.

Looking ahead, we are developing the summer 2024 programme now. The base programme for 2024 will again be in excess of 75 walks. In addition we have some extras:

- Vini has set up a week in the Dolomites in late august: it is a beautiful walking area.
- We have the weekend at Barmouth already planned and are thinking about an October weekend also, possibly in the Borders.
- Simon has the party night set at St Oswalds for 27th January.

Cathy, who is central to our Club's operation, will update you on membership numbers; the headline is that we have a strong membership, with a steady flow of new members. However, we must all play our part in keeping our numbers strong by welcoming new members. We remain a diverse, inclusive, club of caring individuals who love walking and socialising: our two essential strands.

4. Membership Report

As Peter Winter mentioned we continue to enjoy a healthy membership, standing currently at around 137. 16 of these joined this year (the same number of new members as in 2022). We also circulate walks to a further 22 potential members and I am delighted to say that 3 of these attended our first walk in 2024 and seem keen to join.

Many members join through personal recommendation and for that we thank you, the members, and hope you will continue to encourage those you know to come along and try us out. We can never be complacent, since once again this year, it is inevitable we will lose some members and will need to find new ones in order for the club to continue to thrive.

Prospective members also find us through our Public Facebook page and our Website.

I would like to add my thanks to both Jane Burton for managing Facebook so well and to both Diane Beswick for setting up and managing the old website and latterly Paul Burgess for creating an exciting new website through which we can attract members.

I would encourage you to look at your new website. As a committee we decided to invest in paying a small amount per month to enable us to have greater flexibility in the design of the site and add photographs in the hope this will attract more interest. It seems to be working, since its launch has produced an increase in the rate of enquiries.

By all our members regularly visiting the site, perhaps we can keep it high in google searches – it carries photos of the walk and the full walking programme amongst further useful information.
(<https://warringtonhfwalkingclub.com/>)

Finally, we record numbers on walks, to allow us to monitor how the club is doing. Just for your interest these are some of the figures

The highest attendance tends to be on the Summer Wednesday Evening walks, with some members only coming out of hibernation for these. Average per walk on Wednesday walks tends to hover around 20 with average on weekends being around 19 - the higher grade ones tend to attract around 8 on average

Thanks to Gary Walker's spreadsheet, we can see the average walkers per grade

<u>Walk Totals by Grade</u>	<u>Averages</u>
A	7
B	13
C	19
D	23

We are also able to see who does the most walks and the record goes for the second year to Craig with 59 walks this year!!

5. Finance Report

In the absence of Diane, Peter Winter presented the Finance Report.

The Club's accounts for the year to 31st December 2023 had been prepared by Diane Beswick and were circulated prior to the AGM via email. Diane reported a surplus for the year of £565.54 with a healthy balance of £1797.87. This indicates the Club is comfortably operating within its current income levels and the accounts show that the club's financial position remains very healthy.

Some points to note:

The Club has maintained a consistent reserve balance brought forward since 2020. Subscription income was similar to last year with steady membership numbers

The balance from Cyprus Monies have been transferred to the Club

Social event costs are slightly less than last year (£372 compared to £404 in 2022) however this does not include the Christmas party as this has been put back to January 2024, so no cost incurred in 2023.

Recce expenses significantly reduced from last year, with exactly half the number of recce's being claimed for this year compared to 2022

Website fees increased as the new website incurs an annual charge, based on an increased storage capacity to enable walk photos to be included. The previous website was a free service and allowed limited 'gallery' photos only

The Club has once again achieved a considerable reduction in the cost of the programme, by producing it in house and distributing it on walks rather than posting.

Members funds includes deposits held for Club holidays / weekend breaks taking place next year (Dolomites and Barmouth)

The committee has agreed that the level of subscriptions for 2023 should remain unchanged; £12 full and £8 social, although it is likely that this will have to be increased next year.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Simon Payne and seconded by Mike Hilton

6. Committee Reports are detailed below

6.1 Weekend Walks - Lindsay Richards

This is the end of my first year co-ordinating the weekend walk programme and I'd like to thank all those who have helped me by leading walks, obviously nothing would happen without you, so a massive thank you. Also we've had a couple of new leaders in 2023 so thank you Helen Burton and Jean Gleadell and we've a couple more new leaders offering a walk in 2024 which is all great news for the future of the club.

We've had a huge variety of lovely walks in 2023 taking us to North Wales, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire with our Christmas meal this year at Sizergh organised by Jane Burton.

The leaders clearly put a lot of effort into creating interesting walks in beautiful areas often with additional historic or cultural interest such as the National Arboretum at Alrewas, the witches of Pendle, Sizergh Castle and closer to home the Manchester Ship Canal.

Unfortunately we had to cancel the Mam Tor walk in July because of appalling weather but that will be in the next programme and Craig's train ramble was the victim of a couple of train strikes but that did finally manage to go ahead in November.

And finally i just want to mention our club holidays in 2023. We've had 3 very successful holidays....the Cyprus week that you've just heard about organised by Chris and Kathy Sewell with 30 members, the spring weekend at Llandrindod Wells organised by Peter and Linda Hough with 32 members and the Autumn weekend in Northumberland organised by Cathy and Dennis with a record 50 members. A massive amount of work goes into organising these events both before and during the holiday so a special thank you to those involved.

6.2 Weekend Walks - Heather Trelease

Since agreeing to this role I have returned to work, so feel at a slight disadvantage when reporting on the walks I don't attend! I would, therefore, like to say a big thank you to all walk leaders who signed up to the walks having received just 2 emails from me!

29 Wednesday walks were offered this year with an average of 19 per walk. The furthest distance walked was 11 miles with an average of just under 8 miles per walk.

Walks with pub lunches continue to be popular, with Simon offering walks around Cheshire and Cathy organising a Carnforth pub lunch.

2 train walks have also proved popular this year:

In July Chris & Kathy organised a 9 mile walk back to Burrs Country Park in Bury after having taken the steam train to Rawtenstall, which was enjoyed by 30.

Mike's walk, which began with a train from Parbold to Wigan - walking back along the Parbold Canal, was well attended with the Tea Shop to finish proving very popular.

Simon organised another Christmas pub lunch which was attended by 32 members who enjoyed a 5.5 mile walk followed by a delicious meal at the Axe & Cleaver.

Once again, I'd really like to thank all walk leaders for their time and effort in organising such a wide range of walks for us all to enjoy.

6.3 Wednesday Evening Walks - Simon Payne

We offered a total of 7 evening walks this year, all with a healthy number of members attending. Most culminating at a pub for a well earned drink

Craig opened the season with a lovely walk for 21 of us around Pex Hill and Rainhill on May 10th. The second May walk on 24th, was mine. The walk with 29 attending, took us to some areas notable in history, eg Hermitage Green where we discussed Captain Smith of the Titanic, whose wife was brought up on a local farm. Sadly, as you will know, Captain Smith lost his battle with an iceberg in 1912. We also discussed local folklore regarding the Winwick Pig and of course the local hero, Oliver Cromwell and his battle at Red Bank.

June saw a further 2 walks on 7th and 21st. The first being around Croft and Culcheth where 31 of us were ably led by Lindsay and the second, saw a record number of attendees for this year, 39, led by Peter Winter from Grappenhall along the Bridgewater Canal over to Appleton and Grappenhall Heyes.

July 5th saw 24 of us take a walk over Paddington Meadows and along the River Mersey led by myself with some history about the river along the route. From mid July, our rainy season began and probably accounts for the drop in numbers on the following walks. Nevertheless, Sue Lawton's walk did manage to attract 18 of us on 19th July. Sue took us from Appleton Thorn to High Cliff Cemetery where we enjoyed great views of Warrington.

We managed to squeeze in 3 walks into August.

I led another walk on 2nd August. 14 of us enjoyed an amble around Woolston Park and beyond. Then on 16th, Cathy Carter led 16 members on a walk from Cheshire and through the lovely Sankey Valley.

The final walk was one with a difference - A Treasure Hunt around Warrington Town Centre. This was an excellent event organised by Cathy and Dennis which had 26 of us, running around like headless chickens to decipher the cleverly worded clues. We did all make it back to the Blue Bell Inn for a drink and to discover the answers, though some of us had to be recalled by phone since light was fading and time was up.

Thanks to all those who led walks and whilst I have the opportunity, we are now pulling together the Summer Programme, so please see me afterwards to offer an evening walk for Summer 2024. – I have the dates!!!

6.4 Higher Grade Walks - Vini Martino

I'm pleased to report another successful year with a great selection of walks. I would like to thank all the walk leaders – Kerry, Wayne, Craig, Gordon, Paul and Tony and all the walkers that attended.

Out of 12 planned walks, we had 3 cancellations due to weather conditions, one was rescheduled resulting in 10 completed walks.

We had 3 walks in the Lakes, 3 in North Wales, 2 in Yorkshire Dales and 2 in Peak District. Like previous years, The Lakes and Snowdonia have proved most popular.

We had 7 walk leaders and 32 walkers through the year with an average of 8 walkers per walk.

I have a few awards to give out –

First goes to the leader who attracted most walkers – Gordon with 17 when he led Shining Tor
Second, the walker who attended most walks – you won't be surprised that this goes to Craig with a magnificent 8 out of 10

Finally, can I make an appeal for new leaders. We are always keen to increase the walk leader pool and I can assure anyone considering this that they will get full support from myself and I'm sure from the other leaders. Please contact me if you want to discuss this possibility.

7. Social Events - Simon Payne

It is great to be able to report that we have had good attendances at all 8 of our social events this year. So here is what you enjoyed (or missed)!

February Club Night. – with my first choice for speaker this Valentine's day unfortunately not able to make it, we still had an entertaining evening with Sue Holden, a retired solicitor who gave us an humorous insight into how some of our laws came into being.

March Club Night - Our very own Peter Turner befuddled us as we tried to catch him out whilst he performed some of his magic. Even close up, we were speechless as he tried to explain what had just happened in front of us.

April Spring Supper – Having been let down by the original choice of venue, 24 of us enjoyed a meal at the Woodlands in Great Sankey. Thanks to our Secretary, Cathy who seems to have an extensive knowledge of hosteries, for rescheduling this at short notice.

September Autumn Supper To close the evening programme, 34 of us attended this event at the Italian Restaurant, Café Caruso in Warrington Town Centre. A bonus was that Thursday night was a promotion evening which made it all the more attractive price wise.

Overall, opinion was that it was a great success - although as Seniors, some did find the venue a little noisy particularly the adjoining table hosting a Hen Night!

Thanks to Cathy who sorted out the money to the penny.

October saw another First Aid Course at Lymm Safety Central. 13 of our members benefitted from this Save a Life event, the second we have held for the Club. After a tour of the fascinating Safety Central Building, attendees learnt about various aspects of First Aid, including practical sessions on using a defibrillator.

October Club Night it was disappointing to have the speaker cancel at the last minute, albeit for very genuine reasons – he was hospitalised. Rather than cancel, it was decided that we should instead host a Quiz Night in October rather than November. It was well attended and caused a great deal of hilarity as people puzzled over the answers.

I submitted some question sheets and thanks to Cathy Carter and Sue Lawton for supplying others and between us rescuing this evening.

November Club Night – having used up the idea of the Quiz Night for October, I rather rashly volunteered to share my experiences after leaving the Royal Navy up to my retirement in 2006 from British Airways – From Sea Ports to Airports. I consider myself fortunate to have had such an interesting job and was happy to share it with people.

Wednesday Christmas Walk and Meal 12th December. - With numbers initially booked for 25, it proved popular with 33 eventually attending the meal and a further 2 just coming on the walk. The walk took us around Dunham Massey and onto the Park Estate, with a detour on the day to avoid flooding. A coffee stop en route was much appreciated.

8. Election of Officers

Chairman - There was only one nomination for this position, Peter Winter
Proposed by Craig Manchester Seconded by Dennis Carter

Secretary - There was only one nomination for this position, Cathy Carter
Proposed by Jo Frankland Seconded by Alan Kite

Treasurer - Diane Beswick had indicated she wished to step down and Peter Winter thanked her sincerely for her work over the last 4 years on the committee
There was one nomination, Gary Walker
Proposed by Peter Winter Seconded by Daphne Thomas

All above were ratified by those present.

9. Election of the Remaining Committee

A new position of Website Manager had been created, for which there was one nomination, Paul Burgess
Proposed by Cathy Carter Seconded by Jan Pritchard Ratified by those present.

Lindsay Richards, Weekend Walks Co-ordinator

Heather Trelease, Wednesday Walks Co-ordinator

Simon Payne, Evening Walks and Social Events Co-ordinator

Vini Martino, Higher Grade walks co-ordinator

had indicated their willingness to remain on the committee.

Proposed by Jan Pritchard Seconded by Mike Hilton

All above were ratified by those present.

10. Formal Motions – no formal motions had been submitted.

11. Any Other Business

Two issues were discussed:

The possibility of resurrecting a central meeting point in Warrington to help share lifts – put forward by Gordon Sloane and the idea of offering some lower Grade walks on weekends and some more challenging ones on Wednesdays to encourage those who work to come on weekends put forward by Sue and Ged Murphy.

Various views were put forward and these will be discussed at the first committee meeting.
Peter Winter thanked everyone for attending the meeting closed at 9.05pm

Chairman

Date