

Warrington HF Ramblers
Minutes of 75th AGM – St Oswalds, Padgate
Tuesday 14 January 2025 7.30pm

1. Attendees and Apologies

38 present at the venue. 17 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: Craig Manchester seconded by: Gordon Sloane

Matters Arising

There was one action from the 2024 AGM which involved a discussion regarding re-installing a central meeting point. This was taken forward to the committee meeting in February and debated extensively but it was agreed to stay with the current method of getting to walks.

3. Chairman's Address - Peter Winter

Welcome all. 2024 has been another great year for our club. Your committee will cover individual walk groups later in the agenda, but the 2024 highlights included:

- 75 walks
- 2 weekends away
- A week walking in the Dolomites
- Spring and Autumn suppers
- Two Christmas walks and meals.
- 75th anniversary party
- 2 Club Nights
- 109 club members completed a walk, with 22 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 onto the paths, fields and hills who make this all happen. We have very accessible walks , especially the mid-week programme, whilst also having the more challenging high grade walks. 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 four walks this year, including a mid-week evening walk on the summer solstice. 30 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:

- Vini for the adventurous week in the Dolomites
- Cathy and Dennis Carter, with very successful weekends at Melrose in the borders and at Barmouth on the Welsh coast
- Cathy and Dennis Carter for a Treasure Hunt ramble.
- Carmena for taking over from Heather mid-year.
- Rona for developing the social programme from Simon, immediately jumping into a busy programme
- Paul Burgess for the redevelopment of our web site to improve member recruitment and communications in general

Gary 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, thus avoiding postage charges.

However, as foreseen last year, we are proposing increasing subscriptions to £15 a year. This is the first increase for 12 years and will ensure our financial position for a number of years to come.

Looking ahead, we are developing the summer 2025 programme now. The base programme for 2025 will again include 75 walks. In addition we have some extras:

- Chris and Kathy have set up a week in the Tatra mountains in Poland for late August: it is a beautiful walking area and relatively unknown.
- We have the weekend at Portinscale already planned for April and are thinking about an October weekend also.
- Rona is putting together a series of social events, including a summer party event.

Cathy 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.

I would personally like to thank the committee for their enormous support in 2024. In particular:

- Heather, Carmena, Lindsay and Vini for walks coordination
- Simon and Rona for the social activities
- Cathy and Gary for our Secretariat and Treasury functions.
- Paul for lifting our web site to a new level

Thank you for your continuing support of the Club. I am happy to take questions.

4. Membership Report

As Peter Winter mentioned we continue to enjoy a healthy membership, standing currently at around 144. although around 6 of these are non walkers.

18 of these joined this year (16 in 2023). We also circulate walks to a further 22 potential members.

So it is interesting to look at how prospective members find us through This year, most of them have come through on line searches on our Public Facebook page and our Website. I would like to thank Jane Burton for managing both the Public and our Private Facebook pages and to add my thanks to Paul Burgess for creating and maintaining an exciting new website which has definitely contributed to more enquiries this year. Paul will talk more about the website shortly.

We also had a first this year, after successfully getting 2 articles detailing the Club's 75th Anniversary published, one in the Warrington Guardian and one in Warrington Worldwide, we were invited to be interviewed on Radio Warrington. This was broadcast on Wednesday 15 May 2023 on Radio Warrington (not sure that anyone actually heard it) Sadly, although this publicity triggered a high number of enquiries, few translated into membership.

Our other primary source of new members is personal recommendation and I would echo Peter's words on how important it is to welcome these into the Club. As always, we will lose a number of members this year, at least 10 members have not walked at all this year, so we need to ensure those places are filled.

Website Report

The present website is now in its second year and content continuously growing. The purpose of the website is two fold; firstly to attract new members and secondly to provide information and entertainment to existing members.

If you Google 'Warrington Walking Clubs' the site appears as number 3 on the list, so it is easily found by anybody in the area looking for a walking club. Cathy tells me that she has seen about 40 enquiries this year, through the website, and of these 18 have been converted into membership. We see a steady, but quite low numbers of visitors throughout the year, the exception being when Cathy went on local radio at our 75th anniversary when numbers shot up to about 60 visitors per day.

In terms of providing information to members the content of the site has been regularly updated throughout the year. To make you aware things you can find on the site are:

- The walks programme
 - Including the pdf version that Cathy circulates
- General Information for Walkers
 - Mainly for new walkers
 - Includes
 - Equipment required
 - Walk grades explained
 - Safety information
 - Guidance for walking with dogs
- Newsletters
- Committee member profiles
- Gallery
 - This is the main area of the website. There are pictures from each walk, mainly copied from Facebook. The aim is not to duplicate our Facebook group, but to provide pictures for those who don't use Facebook and potential new members.
 - Also included are pictures from over the years:
 - Alan Kite and Jo Frankland have provided their best pictures
 - Pictures shown at the 75th anniversary
- A members section
 - This area is pass word protected and you need to set up an account
 - It includes
 - Club Constitution
 - Programmes – pdf version of the programme
 - AGM minutes
 - Forms (e.g. for reccy expenses)

So please take some time to have a look at the website. If there is anything you would like to include, let me know.

If anybody is struggling to set up access to the members area give me a shout.

<https://warringtonhfwalkingclub.com/>

5. Finance Report. Gary Walker

Summary (plus Notes) for the Annual Accounts for the Year Ending 31-December-2024 were emailed to members on 07-Jan-2025.

Key items are identified below.

1. In Year Surplus / Deficit – Surplus of £101.60.
2. End of Year Balance Surplus / Deficit – Surplus of £1,899.47.
3. Membership – 134 Walking / 6 Social Members / 4 Honorary Members.
4. Subscription Income – Stable.
5. Recce Expenses, Insurance, and Website Fees – Increased.
6. Social Events – New Year Party and 75th Anniversary Party Resulted in Deficits of £137.50 and £112.08, respectively.

7. Members Funds – Payments Towards the Spring Weekend (Barmouth), the Copper Mines Visit (Alderley Edge), the Walking Holiday (Dolomites), the Autumn Weekend (Melrose) and the (Wednesday and Sunday) Xmas Lunches, Have Passed Through the Club Account – A Surplus of £10.00 From These Activities Has Been transferred to the Club Funds – No Other Monies Relating to These Activities Remain in the Reported Accounts.
8. Members Funds – Payments Towards the 2025 Spring Weekend (Keswick) Are Included in the Club Accounts – The Monies Relating to These Activities are Excluded from the 2024 Balance Surplus / (Deficit) in the Reported Accounts.
9. Members CASH Donation to Charity:
 - £145.00 Collected at the New Year Party.
 - £226.00 Collected at the 75th Anniversary Party.
 - £371.00 Donated to the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association.

Thanks to Cathy and Peter in the early months (when there was limited access to the bank account) and at the end of the year (when I was laid up with a small health problem) ... thanks to you all for your patience!

6. Committee Reports are detailed below

6.1 Weekend Walks - Lindsay Richards

So, I've been looking back at our 2024 programme and we've had a fantastic year of walks. We've done 22 weekend walks (not including High Grade walks) generally getting around 15 walkers. The maximum number of people on any one walk was 35 with Dennis and Cathy last January on the Wirral which I remember was a beautiful, sunny winters day.

So, we've been to Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, North Wales, the Wirral, Derbyshire, Shropshire and Cumbria. Obviously we go for the walking and the scenery but we often get added interest thrown in too, such as:

- stopping for fish and chips and ice creams at Parkgate with Dennis and Cathy
- a town walk at Oswestry with Paul
- history and mythology at Alderley Edge with Phil
- fantastic views for minimal effort at Llanfairfechan with John Henley
- fantastic views for loads of effort with Kerry, climbing Pendle Hill on one of the hottest days of the year
- gusts of 50mph blowing us over at Winscar Reservoir with Gary
- and our Christmas walk and meal at Frodsham with Rona.

Unfortunately we can't control the weather so previously Jo and I had to cancel our Mam Tor walk in 2023 but we finally managed to do this in May. Sandra had to cancel her Lyme Park walk because of gale force winds but we will try and get that on again in the summer programme.

Phil followed up on one of his walks by organising a trip to the mines at Alderley Edge in June which was a great idea and really popular with 36 people going.

Our club weekends in 2024 were Barmouth in March and Melrose in October which were both great weekends and extremely popular with 40 people at Melrose. So thanks to Cathy for organising both these weekends and to our walk leaders during the weekends, Phil and Yvonne, Daphne, Gary, Wendy and Michael, Cathy and Dennis.

So finally I just want to say thank you to all our weekend walk leaders throughout the year, we all really appreciate the time and effort you put in.

But a special mention to those who led for the first time in 2024:

- Jean Gleadell at Loggerheads and also in Derbyshire
- Len Barlow in Derbyshire
- Sue and Ged Murphy at Ladybower Reservoir

Also those who have previously led Wednesday or High Grade walks but in 2024 have added weekend walks to their repertoire:

- Jayne Adamson
- Mike Hilton
- Tony Whitehead
- Andy McLean.

6.2 Wednesday Day and Evening Walks - Carmena Wood

I became a member of the Club in March 2023 and joined the committee as the Wednesday Walks Co-ordinator in August 2024 so I'm pretty new to all this. I'm genuinely really pleased to be able to support the Club in this way, particularly as I'm terrified at the prospect of leading a walk!

This brings me to my first point which is a huge and heartfelt thank you to all our intrepid walk leaders who have provided us with an incredibly interesting and varied selection of walks across the NW region. All the walks have been well organised with accurate descriptions and good directions and well-led on the day giving us confidence that we are in safe hands. I don't underestimate the thought and care that goes into the research and preparations and I'm hugely grateful that people were so responsive in my first endeavour at pulling together the programme for the Autumn and Winter.

Wednesday Evening Walks

On average the 8 evening walks attracted 26 walkers compared with 24 last year and only one was cancelled due to horrendous rain throughout the day and evening. As expected the walks were all grade D, around 4.5/5 miles in length and within 7 miles of the centre of Warrington. The most well attended walk was Daphne's starting from Lymm library with 32 walkers. These popular walks are clearly a very important part of our programme and most provide a good social opportunity for a catch up in the pub afterwards.

Wednesday Day Walks

In total we had 26 walks covering a broad geography including Cheshire; Lancashire; Merseyside; the Wirral; Manchester and into Wales and the Lakes. Three of our walks included an opportunity for a pub lunch and unsurprisingly these saw the best attendance.

On average 19 people participated in Wednesday walks which is on a par with last year.

Phil and Yvonne's Halloween walk from Salmesbury Hall was not only the best attended of the regular walks with 28 walkers but also the most fascinating in terms of historical background. Phil clearly has a talent for both research and bringing a story to life.

In terms of the walk grades we have become more ambitious with 7 being grade B versus 2 for 2023, 19 at grade C and 2 gentler rambles at grade D. I think it's really important that we continue with a good mix so that we encourage people of different abilities to walk with the Club.

Despite the inclement weather for parts of last year, which probably made for some of the muddiest conditions we've seen, none of the day walks were cancelled to my knowledge. The wettest walk was Lindsay's around Thurstaston but only 2 walkers cancelled and we soldiered on though quite sensibly Lindsay cut the walk short to give us an opportunity to go home and dry out.

From a personal perspective I enjoyed every walk of 2024, regardless of the weather and conditions.

I do have a personal favourite which is Cathy and Dennis' Llangollen walk which had a bit of everything: beautiful countryside; stunning views; horseshoe falls; a pretty church and an historic abbey that provided a stunning backdrop for lunch.

One of our fellow walkers said to me last year "Where else can you walk 10 miles and barely notice because the company is so good?" so my final note is to thank everyone for their companionship, interesting conversation and help over the many stiles I struggled over in the past year.

6.3 Higher Grade Walks - Vini Martino

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

We completed 10 walks in all, 5 in the Lakes, 4 in North Wales, and 1 in Peak District. Like previous years, The Lakes and Snowdonia have proved most popular.

We had 8 leaders and 33 different walkers through the year with an average of 9.4 per walk which is an increase from last year.

My awards this year go to -

First, Andy and Jane, joint winners for the most leads, 2 each

Second, Andy and Tony, joint winners for attracting the most walkers, 13 on the Old Man of Coniston and The Glyderaus.

Finally, the walker who attended most walks – as in previous years this goes once again to Craig with 8. He would have done all 10 but we stopped him from joining the first 2 due to his heart condition.

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 – Rona Bryce

Firstly I would like to thank Simon for the years of events that he has organised.

Of the events that I have organised:

- We had an interesting talk from Chris Sewell, a member of the club, about the strange and wonderful birds from around the world.
- Followed by a retired doctor giving his comical experiences of being a young doctor in the 1960s and 1970s.
- There was a Christmas meal at Netherton Hall and all agreed the service and food were very good.

For 2025 there are events booked for:

- 11 Feb - a quiz night that is being run by Peter our own Magician.
- 11 March - 10 pin bowling.

And I am looking into a few events that are better suited for the summer as they will be out in the open.

8. Election of Officers

Chairman - There was only one nomination for this position, Peter Winter
Proposed by Craig Mancheser *Seconded by* Kerry Mutch

Secretary - There was only one nomination for this position, Cathy Carter
Proposed by Rona Bryce *Seconded by* Daphne Thomas

Treasurer - There was one nomination for this position Gary Walker
Proposed by Yvonne Wakefield *Seconded by* Phil Wakefield

All above were ratified by those present.

9. Election of the Remaining Committee

All remaining committee members have indicated that they are happy to continue in their roles as follows:.

Lindsay Richards, Weekend Walks Co-ordinator

Carmena Wood Wednesday day and Evening Walks Co-ordinator

Vini Martino, Higher Grade walks co-ordinator

Rona Bryce Social Events Co-ordinator

Paul Burgess Website Manager

Proposed by Chantelle Seaborn *Seconded by* Jan Pritchard

All above were ratified by those present.

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

11. Any Other Business

The issue of recce expenses was raised by Kerry Mutch. She felt that 15p per mile was insufficient recompense since it did not cover fuel costs and proposed that it be raised to 20p per mile in line with the rate suggested for car sharing.

It was stated that the rate had been reviewed in August and was felt to be fair, plus payment was always meant to be a contribution rather than full cover and 15p for most cars did cover the cost of fuel.

It was also, however, noted that the membership subscription had been raised.

A straw poll showed the majority agreed with Kerry, however, since decisions cannot be taken at the AGM it was agreed that the committee would review the rate in the near future.

Peter Winter thanked everyone for attending the meeting closed at 8.15pm

Chairman

Date