

Annual General Meeting 7.30pm Tuesday 1st December 2020

By Zoom

Minutes

1. Welcome statement by Chair.

The meeting was attended by 38 members. Apologies for absence received from Jane Christie. The group also welcomed Valerie Clark and Geetha Shamanna from the London blind ramblers group and noted that Valerie has been mentioned in the birthday honours for her work.

2. Agreement of minutes of last AGM, 10th December 2019 and matters arising.

The minutes of the 2019 AGM were approved, proposed by Jackie Gower and seconded by Margaret Lydamore.

There is continued work on getting feedback from new members on why and how they joined Ramblers. This was an action from the 2019 meeting.

3 The following reports were received from the group officers for the year ending 30th September 2020.

3.1 Chair's report.

I've had two interesting years as Chair and am very glad to have had the support of an excellent committee. So thank you all very much. I've really enjoyed working with you and think we've become a good team. This was very apparent when we had to decide how we, as a group, would respond to the prospect of having walks of up to 30 people after Ramblers got agreement from the Government that our walks were an organised sport. We felt that in a suburban setting 12 was a suitable maximum number to have on our walks and that we should choose routes that avoided members taking long journeys on public transport. We also decided that for the sake of members who didn't feel safe on public transport and had cars a few walks could start at a car park. Until we were able to start walks again it seemed there wouldn't be much to do, except keep in touch with members to check if they were well and not finding isolation too difficult.

Since then my main activities have been chairing committee meetings, contacting Ramblers Central Office more often than last year, sending quarterly updates about our activities and how people could access walks and responding to requests that came in about the group. The most recent came from Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham GPs Federation asking if West London Ramblers would be willing to be listed as a partner in an application they were submitting to obtain Government funding for Green Social Prescribing. The aim is for GPs to be able to prescribe activities such as walks, gardening and social activities to suit patients' interests rather than prescribing medication for their condition. Although such walks are not part of our usual programme we felt it would be in keeping with the overall aim of Ramblers in encouraging walking for all. We weren't sure that anything would come of this, but the application has gone through to stage two of the process and I had to provide more detailed information about our likely offering. We await the outcome. The next committee will carry this forward if it happens but I have offered to do one socially prescribed walk each month. A few others have volunteered too so we are reasonably confident that we will be able to offer at least one short local walk a week in various parts of our local area.

As well as thanking the committee I must thank all the leaders who have enabled us to get together whenever possible this year. I led my first walk in my local area in July and although I knew in theory how much work leaders do I became much more aware of the time spent checking mileage and timing, deciding on refreshment stops, researching places of interest along the way and of course doing a recce.

So to all our leaders a huge thank you for the range of wonderful walks you provide.

Thanks was given to the committee and walks leaders especially in view of the extra work created by Covid.

3.2 Treasurers report.

Our bank balance as of the end of 2019-20 is £1,347.14. All cheques are cleared and we have the Quarter four payment from the Area.

The Table below give a breakdown of our Expenditure for last year.

Expenditure category	Amount (£)	Details
Walk programmes/ Walks Related	£322.57	Not everybody on email, so there are costs associated with printing and distributing hard copies pf our walk programme.
Publicity/newsletters	£132.93	Payments for publicity materials to be used at stalls at fairs or to be used for other recruitment (walking festival), £50 for advert
Meetings	£55.80	For last year's AGM (billed this year) and one Committee Meeting. Rest have been done by Zoom so at no cost. (The Treasurer kindly lets us use his account for free.)

The Following Table summarises our income for 2019-20.

Source	2019-20
The Ramblers Association	£704.09

RWH Travel Ltd	£190.00
Total	£894.09

Account Approvals

The Accounts have been subject to scrutiny by our Independent Examiner (Linda Foster) and she has approved them. They were then submitted to the Area Treasurer who is content.

Some Key Points

- Lower than normal expenditure due to Covid-19
- Little meeting costs as being done by Zoom!
- We forwent our third Quarter Payment from Ramblers HQ. This was agreed given lower levels of expenditure, the belief that Head Office would make better use of the monies in the circumstances and the position regarding our reserves.
- This year accounts correct a late payment from HQ at the end of 2018-19. This meant there was an additional income of £270 for 2019-20. The issue seemed to relate to our not being acknowledged as having moved to Ramblers Inner London Area.

Reserves

Our current level of reserves is good. If it was to be based on 2019-20 expenditure then the reserve percentage is 263%. This is well above 100% level recommended. Ramblers recommends taking action if reserves are too high.

However: -

- It is only 88.5% if based on 2018-19 expenditure.
- We did receive an “extra” £270 this year as a late payment

We therefore believe the Reserves are at an appropriate level for now, and that we just keep under observation.

Ramblers Holidays

Please remember to use Ramblers Holidays – we get a small commission where members use them.

3.3 Footpath Secretary’s report

The main event this year has been that 21 members of this Ramblers Group have agreed to check paths which are public rights of way in the London boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow. So all these paths in the 2 boroughs are now fully covered. Footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways are included.

I have provided all checkers with A4 size street maps and OS maps, both marked up to identify the paths to be checked. Also Path Checking Notes, including a checklist of things to look out for, like obstructions, signage, litter, fly tipped rubbish etc., and a report form.

There is a total of 260 paths in the 2 boroughs, so this averages about 12 paths per checker. New problems have already been identified, particularly with the dumping of litter and within Ealing, LAGER Can (Litter Action Group – Ealing Residents) have organised their own teams of volunteer litter pickers in cooperation with the borough Council.

On the Dog Rose Ramble path in Northolt my thanks go to our member Jane Ruhland for arranging litter picking with LAGER Can, also for contacting the responsible LB Ealing Ranger who is now involved with improving the path and signage across the Lime Trees golf course.

About 120 bags of litter were collected, plus old mattresses, buggies, tyres etc.

Then there was a path in Norwood Green, where I was able to involve LAGER Can, and 38 bags of litter and a mattress were collected.

I have not yet been able to make similar arrangements in LB Hounslow, but that is very much on my agenda.

I am regularly receiving report forms from checkers, which enables me to take action where necessary. I look forward to receiving many more over the next few weeks.

3.4 Walks organiser's report.

We started the year with a very successful Winter Walking Festival which attracted a lot of our members and quite a few new people who had seen it advertised in local shops and libraries. The spring programme (Feb- May) included exciting plans for two new long distance paths (Green Chain Way and Saxon Shore Line) and two 'themes' (walks from 'the end of the line' and walks exploring rivers, canals and lakes). In February Maureen Colledge led the first of the Green Chain walks but then in early March all our plans had to be abandoned when the first national lock down was announced.

We were not allowed to organise any group walks for four months so concentrated on expanding the resources on our web-site to help members find new ideas for their own lockdown walks. Mary Rutherford produced detailed walk directions and a lot of interesting local information for the four sections of The Round Ealing Circuit (TREC) that we had developed in 2019. Two TREC extensions were added to link into other attractive local areas (Acton & Chiswick and Hanwell & Osterley). A number of people also wrote up their own favourite lockdown walks so we now have 21 local walks available for people to download.

In July we were given the green light to resume group walks but under strict guidelines to ensure they were Covid secure. Numbers were restricted which necessitated introducing a booking system but fortunately most people were able to secure a place on walks they wanted to go on. Leaders were required to undertake a risk assessment and keep a record of people on the walk in case we needed to engage with the NHS Test and Trace System.

Leaders have been magnificent in not only offering walks in these difficult circumstances but also undertaking all the extra administration. Initially the walks tended to be local and we explored the many beautiful green spaces in the Ealing area. As people became more confident about using public transport, we ventured further afield but still with a close eye on finding routes that seemed less risky. Because the situation remained uncertain, we only produced programmes for one month at a time but a lot of both existing and new members were able to enjoy walking with the group from July to the beginning of November when a second lockdown was announced. We plan to issue a programme in early December which will run (hopefully) through to the end of January based on advice from Ramblers Central Office.

We are optimistic that we may be able to resume our usual programmes from spring 2021 and hope to resurrect our plans for the long distance and theme walks that had sadly to be postponed in 2020.

3.5 Membership secretary's report.

West London Group Membership status:

	2020 (27 Nov 2020)	2019 (1 Dec 2019)
Full Members	482	471
Affiliates (from other groups)	31	27
Total	513	498
Contactable via email	338 (66%)	300

It is pleasing to see, that during this difficult year, our membership numbers have not only maintained the healthy numbers but increased. Our thanks go out to all members who have continued to support the aims of The Ramblers and renewed their membership, even though the availability of led walks has been limited at times due to lockdowns. Additionally, I want to acknowledge the dedication of our Walks Co-ordinators and Leaders who have continued to deliver a monthly walk programmes (when allowed) so encouraging our existing and new members. Following last year's AGM we completed a short reconciliation activity to check email address contact details for members. This resulted in a small increase of the numbers who are now contactable via email, so saving on paper and postage. Luckily, with us now relying on just email to send out the monthly walks programme, it's good to know that it is reaching 66% of the membership.

It's been a difficult few months for us all following the Covid-19 outbreak and it will continue to be challenging in the months ahead. You may have seen a recent update from Ramblers Head Office that the annual membership fee review took place on 1 October where the board of trustees approved to not increase membership fees. The current fees will apply to new and renewing members until 30 September 2021.

4. Election of Committee.

There were two changes to the committee.

Monika Eady was elected as Chair (proposed by Margaret Spooner, seconded by Margaret Thomas) and Carolyn Oxley was elected Programme coordinator (proposed by Jackie Gower and seconded by Mary Rutherford)

All other members of the committee were reelected (proposed by Anna Harris and seconded by Maureen Colledge) as follows

Secretary – Martin Harris

Treasurer – Innes Garden

Membership secretary – Mary Rutherford

Walks organiser – Jackie Gower

Footpath secretary – Howard Densley

Webmaster – Pete Grist

Social secretary – Jyoti Gudka

Area delegate – Sue Aldridge

Hansa Javda-Patel also remains on the committee. The post of Publicity coordinator remains vacant.

5. Appointment of Ind. Examiner (auditor).

Linda Foster was reelected (proposed by Margaret Spooner and seconded by Sue Williams)

6. Questions about the Report and Any Other Business.

There was a discussion on the frequency of the publishing of the programme. This is a balance between how far in advance leaders have to commit themselves and the cost of sending out the printed programme.

7. West London Group AGM in 2021.

It was agreed to hold the 2021 AGM at the Northfields community centre on a date to be arranged.

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