

Ramblers' Association West London Group

Annual General Meeting 7.15pm Tuesday 5th December 2023.

Northfields Community Centre, 71A, Northcroft Road, W13 9SS

Minutes

1. Welcome by Chair.

The chair welcomed 35 members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Janet Clark and Pete Grist.

2. Agreement of minutes of last AGM, 6th December 2022 and matters arising.

The minutes of the 2022 AGM were approved and there were no matters arising.

3. Reports from the Chair, Treasurer and Programme coordinator of West London Group of the Ramblers Association for the year ending 30th September 2023 and questions.

3.1 Chair's report.

It's been a good year. We managed to offer a full walking programme. The Elizabeth Line has given us a new range of locations to start our walks from. However, the rail strikes played havoc with our programme and many walks had to be replaced and rescheduled. Once again, we supported the London Blind Walkers with a couple of walks.

The highpoints of the year were the holidays. In particular the walking holiday to Faversham in Kent in April and the holiday to the Isle of Wight in September were very popular. By providing our own walk leaders we managed to keep the cost down. A group of us treated ourselves to an HF holiday in the Yorkshire Dales in June where we had an amazing mud free time during one of the heat waves.

We survived the introduction of the new website - with lots of 'teething' trouble - and most of our walk leaders got used to the new walks manager. The new table format of the printable bimonthly programme doesn't seem to have caused any problems.

Membership in early October was 516 which is similar to previous years. This includes 41 affiliates and the number of those not providing an email address is slowly going down (80). As before we did send an invitation to the AGM to those by post and there are 9 who receive the programme by post.

We had a well-supported publicity stall at the Brentford Festival in September to attract new members. We offered business cards with our web address on rather than sample programmes. We also had a joint publicity stall with Richmond Ramblers at the Celebrating the River Crane Festival in Twickenham in October.

Looking forward we are planning more walking holidays in 2024. A long weekend in Woodbridge in Suffolk in May and a few days in the Elan Valley in Wales in September.

My thanks go to all the committee members for their continued work over the year and to Chris Parnell for sending out the emails to members.

3.2 Treasurer's report.

3.2.1 Introduction

A short summary of the last two Financial Years is given in the Table 1 below: -

Table 1
Summary of Accounts for 2021-22 and 2022-23

	Financial Year	
	2022-23	2021-22
Opening balance	£1,445.78	£1,511.28
Receipts		
	£583.84	£277.78
Self-Funded Holidays		
RW Travel ¹	£80.00	£110.00
Day Walks	£186.90	
Holidays	£14,300.04	£1,600.00
Total Receipts	£15,150.78	£1,987.78
Payments		
Newsletters/Publicity	£167.90	£90.00
Expenses	£151.16	£7.92
AGM Meeting Costs	£26.00	£60.00
Walks Related	£108.33	£165.36
Walk Leader Training	£630.00	£130.00
Self-Funded Holidays		
Day Walks	£186.90	
Holidays	£14,300.00	£1,600.00
Total Payments	£15,570.29	£2,053.28
Surplus/Deficit	£419.51	£65.50
Closing balance	£1,026.27	£1,445.78

¹ This is a payment we receive from Rambler WorldWide Holidays if a member books a holiday with them.

The accounts for 2022-23 were reviewed by our Independent Examiner Paul Ryan who took over the role from Linda Foster. The accounts were checked and duly signed off and submitted to our Area Treasurer in November.

I would like to thank both Linda for her years of service and Paul for volunteering to take on this role.

3.2.2 Income Expenditure and Balances

As can be seen from Table 1, our routine levels of expenditure are small. Over the past few years we have reduced our costs significantly by reducing the amount of printed walks programme and by moving to on line meetings.

This did mean that our level of reserves increased. Head office policy is that these should be below 100% of annual expenditure. Working out a suitable baseline to look at reserves is not straightforward. We have been running with significantly lower costs over the past few years compared with the pre Covid years, and were waiting to see how these would play out in the longer term. We feel these have now stabilised at our new lower levels and after careful consideration we feel the current level of reserves could and should be safely reduced.

Last year (2021-22) that meant that we turned down two quarters of income allocation from Head Quarters.

This year (2022-23) we reviewed our position again. We felt that the position was now more settled post Covid etc, and that we should look to use our income to maximise the benefit to our members where we could. We therefore sought to spend more on Walk Leader training (including Navigation Training) and on First Aid training.

This meant that we accepted all HQ's payments this year – and also ran at a slight deficit (of -£419.15).

This did bring our balance down – we are now operating at 87.3% compared to >100% previously. However, as stated, we believe our position is sufficiently robust, while offering more to our members.

3.2.3 Self-Funded Holidays.

Another major feature of our accounts is the increase in Self-Funded Holidays. This is where we use our Ramblers Bank account to take payments from members for holidays we organise. Last Year we organised a holiday in Sedbergh in the Yorkshire Dales - which took place in June this year. (Payments split between this year and last.) We also did a day Walk to Harrow School, including a paid for tour round the school. Next year we are organising a holiday in Wales, again with deposits being received this year.

3.2.4 Conclusions

There is little change to our overall financial position, which based on current expenditure levels looks sound. We did spend a little more this year as planned, to help run down our reserves levels. This included the navigation and First Aid courses we organised.

We are running many more financial transactions through our account with using it to collect and pay for Self-Funded Holidays. This affords us the opportunity to collect and pay much more easily, but we just need to be vigilant to ensure all proper controls are in place.

Assuming expenditure remains the same and no unforeseen issues our position is healthy. We should periodically check the need for Quarterly payments from HQ on an as needed basis.

The accounts have been audited.

3.3 Programme and walks report.

Since the Launch of the new Walks manager and Ramblers website there has been a lot of development within West London Ramblers.

Through zoom training and individual discussions our walks leaders are all putting their own walks on the walks manager for checking and publishing to the website. The system has a shared calendar. dates can be held whilst leaders develop their walks without being visible on the website. This has proved very useful for scheduling.

Over the last 4 programmes I have been developing the table layout. Taking into consideration feedback from members about font size, number of pages and layout to make improvements. The December/January programme is now to be used as the template for 2024 although feedback is still welcome.

The programme will continue to be sent out by e-mail every 2 months to all members and affiliates this has proved popular with walk leaders as they do not have to commit too far in advance.

In 2023 our walk leaders have provided a great range of walks from 3 to 16 miles, easy to strenuous with many including details of drop out points and walking pace so members can assess easily if the walk matches their fitness level. Considering that we have had to plan around many train strikes and line closures there have been few weeks where a weekday and weekend walk have not been available. I would like to thank all the walk leaders for working around the travel issues often planning alternate walks at short notice. I would also like to thank everyone who volunteers to lead walks in making this programme of walks possible.

Our aim moving forward is to encourage more members to consider leading walks as this increases the range and number of walks, we can offer everyone as well as supporting the group into the future. We will hear more about new leader training from Rowena. But we also have established leaders who offer buddy support where you can start by co-leading walks. We have a Whats app so leaders can request recce's partners so you can help plan walks. Also we have a library of walk books and an OS map group membership for our leaders to support planning. If there is a walk you enjoy you could share, or if you like walking with us and want to support the group. You may have experience of leading walks elsewhere or be new to leading get in touch with myself Jackie or Rowena to get started.

We also plan to offer 2 long distance paths within 2024 starting in the spring.

The Capital ring: this circular path around London's suburbs is a well-marked well-known route and will be a great opportunity for new walk leaders to lead or co-lead.

The Middlesex Greenway a path across the territorial county of Middlesex.

We will be sending out more details closer to Spring.

3.4 Walks leader training.

A walks leader training programme has been developed by Rowena Muir with the first course ready for delivery on 21/1/24.

4. Election of Committee.

The following posts were elected individually:

- Chair Monika Eady (Proposed by Mary Rutherford and seconded by Vino Kanapathipillai)
- Secretary Martin Harris (Proposed by Mary Rutherford and seconded by Hansa Jadvapati)
- Treasurer Innes Garden (Proposed by Carolyn Oxley and seconded by Margaret Spooner)

Other committee members were elected who will share out the remaining roles at the first committee meeting.

- Membership Secretary
- Programme Coordinator
- Walks Organiser
- Footpaths Secretary
- Webmaster
- Publicity Coordinator

Howard Densley and Zainul Lawrence stood down from the committee and Jim Barnes was duly elected. The remaining committee members who continue are Mary Rutherford, Jackie Gower, Carolyn Oxley, Sue Aldridge, Pete Grist, Hansa Jadvapati, Rowena Muir and Vino Kanapathipillai.

5. Appointment of Ind. Examiner (auditor).

Paul Ryan was reappointed.

6. Discussion about how we can be more inclusive and provide access to walking to a wider group of people. This is now part of Ramblers Association national policy.

The discussion raised issues such as running walks for groups such as Blind Ramblers, refugees etc. How would this be measured?

The discussion also covered Health walks, links with other charities and how to encourage younger walkers.

7. Ideas for 2024.

It was suggested that to incorporate a social element into the group's activities more walks followed by meals could be put on the programme.

8. Any Other Business.

Thanks were given to Zainul and Howard for their work on the committee, to Carolyn and Jackie for getting the walk manager working and to Vino and Hansa for organising the holidays.

9. West London Group AGM in 2024.

It was decided to hold this at Northfields community centre if possible.

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