

THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION
Manchester and High Peak Area

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held in the Friends Meeting House,
Manchester, on Saturday 28 March 2009**

Present: 49 members signed the attendance book, although individual counts indicated that over 60 members were present.

The Chair, Terry Perkins, welcomed members to the meeting and said that prior to starting formal proceedings, the Secretary, Salle Dare, would present a short film from Central Office concerning the rebranding of the RA.

1. Apologies were received from Ann Beasley, Brian Coxon, John Nicholson and John Walton.

1a.1 Salle Dare said that Central Office had considered rebranding important, to dispel current misconceptions amongst the general public e.g. that the RA was mainly concerned with old people wearing boots and rucksacks tramping the hills. It was also important to get the message out that the RA had a role in protecting the countryside. The film also illustrated the new logo and strapline.

1a.2 Several members criticised the new logo on grounds of cost, which was £32,000, saying that it could have been done much more cheaply by inviting members with expertise in this field to submit proposals, and also that the result was poor value for money. Others criticised the logo on the grounds that its meaning was unclear, and that it failed to get the essential message across that the RA was a campaigning organisation, concerned with protecting footpaths and the countryside, and was not just a walking club. Others criticised the lack of consultation, saying that the first they knew about the new logo was when they saw it in *Walk* magazine. John Biggins urged members not to blame the Area Executive Committee (EC) for failing to communicate information to members, as the EC had not received details any earlier than members had.

1a.3 Terry Perkins said that EC members had asked him to write to Chief Executive, Tom Franklin, raising questions about the cost of the new logo and lack of consultation regarding it. He said that the reply had not dealt satisfactorily with the points he had raised. Terry would circulate his letter and Tom Franklin's reply to Group Secretaries.

1a.4 Terry then invited Paul Butler, Director of Finance and Operations, who was representing Head Office at the AGM, to respond to the comments made. Paul said that he had realised that there were strong feelings against rebranding, but he assured members that it had been done with the best of intentions. Regarding cost, he said that other organisations paid much more than the RA had paid for rebranding and that he himself considered that it was good value for money. He said that a lot of the work on the exercise had been done by Central Office staff and that consultation had been carried out amongst some RA members and some members of the public. He did not answer the question from Donald Lee, however, about how these consultees had been chosen. Derek Ingham asked Paul about the reaction at other RA meetings he had attended and Paul replied that a typical reaction had been more favourable than that at the Manchester & High Peak Area AGM. Donald Lee proposed a

motion, which was seconded by Frank Holland, asking for members to signify whether they were in favour of, or against, the rebranding. The result was 11 in favour, 29 against.

2. Opening Remarks:

2.1 Terry Perkins reported that he had attended a memorial service to Sir Martin Doughty, who had recently died. He said that although he had had disagreements with him over the years, he had done much good work for the countryside in the Peak District and latterly for the countryside generally in his capacity as Chair of Natural England, and that his death would be a loss to countryside protection work.

2.2 Terry said that he had been pleased to learn that the proposed Mottram-Tintwistle bypass would probably not now go ahead.

2.3 Terry said that he had also been very pleased to hear that the long running campaign against quarrying on Stanton Moor had finally been won. Thanks were due to the occupiers of the Nine Ladies Stone Circle who had protested by occupying the site over a period of several years.

3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 29 March 2008:

Edgar Ernstbrunner proposed and John Ireland seconded that the minutes be accepted as a correct record. This was agreed nem.con.

4. Matters Arising:

4. Referring to minute 59(c) Janet Cuff asked whether the obstruction forms had been distributed to Walks Leaders. Apparently they had not. Salle Dare would arrange for this to be done.

5. Annual Report:

5.1 Chairman's Report

Terry Perkins said that owing to a misunderstanding between him and the Secretary, a shortened version of his report had been circulated to members. He had now sent out his full report to the Groups. There were no comments on the Chairman's Report.

5.2 Secretary's Report

There were no comments on the Secretary's Report.

5.3 Membership Secretary's Report

(a) Harry Billington updated his report. He said that since the report there had been only a small change in the total Area membership, which was a decrease of 9, down to 4172. He reiterated his concerns about the ongoing problems with the new membership database, introduced in January 2008, and said that other Areas shared his concerns, so much so that two Areas, Derbyshire and Surrey, were proposing a motion at the RA's General Council the following weekend, calling for Central Office to concentrate on the urgent resolution of the problems. Harry hoped that this motion would be passed and would result in urgent action being taken: otherwise he feared that the system would become unworkable.

(b) John Ireland asked what information Harry received. Harry replied that every month he received a membership report informing him of new members, which enabled him to send out Area information to these new members. He also received details of deaths of members, changes of address, renewals and overdue members, but since the introduction of the new system, there had been many inaccuracies. John said that members of his Group, the MAD Walkers, had reported delays in being allocated to a Group. Harry said that there were delays in processing; also members who pay by Direct Debit often get classed as renewals.

(c) Thanks were expressed to Harry for his hard work over the year.

5.4 Footpath Co-ordinator's Report

(a) Terry Perkins said that Clarke Rogerson, Chairman of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society (PNFS), and David Bratt, President of the PNFS, had asked his permission to speak at the meeting regarding comments made about the Society in Edgar Ernstbrunner's report.

Terry had agreed to this.

(b) An exchange of views followed between the PNFS delegates and the Footpath Secretary, with both sides stating their case. However, as matters did not seem to be moving towards reconciliation, the PNFS delegates decided that the best course of action would be for them to leave the meeting.

(c) The Chairman said that he regretted this unfortunate situation and hoped that there would be a reconciliation between the two organisations before too long. The PNFS delegates then left the meeting.

(d) Donald Lee proposed a motion that "the meeting supports the Footpath Co-ordinator's Report", and this was seconded by Harry Billington. The report of the Footpath Officer was approved by 9 votes to 3. Calculated from the number of attendees, approx. 50 members did not vote.

(e) Gloria Gaffney said that she felt it was regrettable that so few members had felt able to support Edgar, who worked extremely hard to safeguard footpaths. Janet Cuff pointed out that the motion had been about support for Edgar's report, not about support for Edgar generally, which was quite a different matter. David Singleton said that the whole affair was most regrettable and that we should have avoided matters reaching this stage.

5.5 Countryside Report

Janet Cuff gave an update on the situation regarding the Mottram-Tintwistle bypass. The Highways Agency had withdrawn from the A57/A628 public inquiry, which meant that should they submit proposals for a similar scheme in the future, the whole statutory process would have to be started all over again. This effectively ruled out a bypass in the short-term or even the medium-term. The reasons for the withdrawal were primarily financial, the North West Leaders Forum having declined to recommend to Government that the bypass should be funded from the forthcoming Regional Funding Allocation.

5.6 Wednesday Walks

Janet Cuff asked that thanks to be recorded to Caroline and Peter Ball for their continuing excellent organisation of the Wednesday Walks, and for maintaining the practice of making public transport arrangements.

5.7 Treasurer's Report

(a) Peter Ball updated his report. The accounts had now been accepted by Central Office, two payments had been received, and at the moment the Area was solvent.

(b) Dave Atwell asked what would be the difference for the Area now that we had joined Unity Bank. Peter replied that it gave Central Office the opportunity to go to the Area Bank Account to assess the overall resources of the Association.

(c) John Biggins made the point that the correct title for the bank was the Unity Trust Bank. He said that it was important to get this right, as the Unity Bank was a bank that operated out of Nigeria.

(d) Terry said compliments should go to Peter for doing a splendid job.

5.8 Coach Rambles Group Report

John Needham said that the Group was continuing to fill one coach. The Charity Commission had confirmed that as long as there were no restrictions on who could join the RA, participation in the coach excursions could be restricted to RA members.

5.9 MAD Walkers (20s – 30s) Group

John Ireland said that the Group were doing well and would be exploring some community themes, such as involvement with other local groups in the area, particularly those involved in conservation and the environment in areas where they walk.

5.10 Manchester & Salford Group and New Mills Group

Nothing to add to the reports.

6. Presentation of Accounts:

This item had been covered under the Treasurer's Report.

7. Examiner's Report:

Peter Ball said that the accounts had gone to the Examiner and had been accepted but that he had not yet received a written report.

8. Election of Officers and individual members:

The Chairman had received the following valid nominations:

President:	NONE	Website Administrator	Brian Coxon
Vice-President:	NONE	Countryside Officer	Janet Cuff
Chairman:	Terry Perkins	Newsletter Co-ordinator:	John Biggins
Vice-Chairman:	Edgar Ernstbrunner	Social Secretary	NONE
Treasurer:	Peter Ball	Short Walks Officer	John Needham
General Secretary:	Salle Dare	Membership Secretary	Harry Billington
Wednesday Walks Officers	Peter & Caroline Ball	Publicity & Information Officer:	NONE
Minutes Secretary	Janet Cuff	Elected member	Joyce Tyldesley
Footpath Coordinator	Edgar Ernstbrunner	Elected member	Gloria Gaffney
Access Officer	NONE	Elected member	John Ireland
Sunday Walks Officer	Jeff Lewis		

The above were all elected individually, nem.con.

9. Appointment of Examiner:

This item was not covered.

10. Motions for Debate:

10.1 Salle Dare, speaking in her capacity as Chair of the new Manchester & Salford Group, said that since the formation of the new Group, there had been confusion amongst members between the Group and the Area. To resolve this confusion, she proposed the following motion:

- In the light of the new Group which covers Manchester & Salford, this AGM resolves to change the name of Manchester and High Peak Area to Greater Manchester & High Peak Area.

The motion was seconded by Mags Metcalf and approved nem.con.

10.2 John Ireland said that as many people now have access to the Internet at home, many bodies, including the Ramblers, give their members the option to receive documents via

electronic means. He proposed that RA members in the Manchester Area should be given this option. He said that he would be able to assist with the process of converting the documents to a format suitable for electronic distribution and with the process of collating email addresses of members wishing to take part. He would also assist with the establishment of a suitable email infrastructure required to send out the documentation.

10.3 Salle Dare said that not only would this save on production and printing costs, but it would also make her job easier, and she would work with John to ask which members wanted it. It was emphasised that participation would be on an entirely voluntary basis, and that hard copies of all documents would still be available to all those who wanted them. John then proposed:

- That the Executive Committee will act to enable those members who wish to do so to have the option to receive documents and notices produced by the Area, including the notification of the AGM, by electronic means and, if required, initiate the processes to make any necessary adjustments to the Constitution in order to facilitate the electronic distribution of such documents and notices.

The motion was seconded by Joanne Harvey and agreed nem.con.

11. Standing Orders:

Salle Dare said that there had been a change to the Standing Orders for EC meetings, i.e. Item 1 should read “at least 6 meetings” instead of “at least 10 meetings”, and “other” should be inserted before the word “month” to read “the first Tuesday of every other month”. The change of name of the Area had also been agreed as above, so the Standing Orders should be for Greater Manchester & High Peak Area”. It was necessary to get the approval of the AGM for these changes. Caroline Ball moved that the revised Orders be approved and this was seconded by Edgar Ernstbrunner and approved nem.con.

12. Any other Business:

None.

13. Closing Remarks:

Terry Perkins said he regretted that this had been a controversial meeting but as Chairman he had tried to be impartial and let everyone have a fair say. He thanked members for attending and invited them to partake of the buffet and then see the slide show that he would be giving.

Janet Cuff 2 April 2009