

CHELTENHAM RAMBLING CLUB

80th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held at the VICTORY CLUB

13th NOVEMBER 2023 @ 7.30PM

PRESENT: *Chairperson, Carol Sadie. General Secretary, Alan Skidmore. Programme secretary, Liz Johnson. Membership Secretary, Lynne Hindmarch. Ordinary Member, Jenny Cotterell.*

CLUB MEMBERS: 19 + 1 guest + 5 committee. Total = 25

The Chair, Carol Sadie welcomed everyone and declared the Cheltenham Rambling Club's 80th Annual General Meeting open.

APOLOGIES: Alan & Gill Parker, Sue Maizonnier, Barbara Pettit, Irene Finlayson, Glynis & Rob Dangerfield, Margaret Churchman, Peter Green, Andria Cole, Lin Skidmore, Jan Cayzer, Judi Noble, Allen Miller, Janet & Robert Aubrey.

MINUTES: The 2022 AGM minutes were agreed as read and approved.

MATTERS ARISING: There were no matters arising from the 2022 AGM minutes.

REPORTS:

Chair's Report from Carol Sadie

It feels like it has been another good year for the club:

- We are generally getting good attendance on walks, with higher numbers on some of the Saturday walks.
- At the end of last year we had a very good Christmas dinner at the Old Courthouse, and are returning there again soon. Thanks to Lynne and Jenny for organising these.
- We ran a successful trip to Sidmouth, which seemed very popular.
- We had a good DIY weekend in Porlock, well run by Guy.
- The evening pub meets have continued. Thanks to Guy for organising these.
- We enjoyed a fun quiz evening, well run by Martin and Andria.
- Several of us took part in a challenging Treasure Hunt in Tewkesbury, ably run by Chris and Sue.
- And of course we've had many many other enjoyable walks.

None of these would be possible without the set of people on the committee, and I would like to thank them all for their hard work this year.

I'd also like to thank everyone who has led a walk this year, bearing in mind that as well as leading on the day, there is also the planning and walking over a walk, which can take considerable time.

However, there is one final thing that I'd like to mention, which is that there are quite a number of gaps on each programme and a smaller group of people leading walks. So I'd like to finish with a plea. Please can everyone consider whether they might lead a walk? Either lead your favourite walk that you already know, or as I have previously offered, a member of the committee would be happy to help any new walk leaders in finding and leading a walk. We need walk leaders to keep the club going. We are particularly short of people leading longer walks, and although it's great that we have many short walks on the programme I would be very sorry if the club turned into a short walks only club.

Treasurer's Report from Judi Noble:

The income this year did not cover our expenditure.

Our income again came primarily from club membership payments (which was slightly down this year compared to last year), plus a small amount of bank interest and a Ramblers holiday award.

Expenditure this year was lower than last year resulting in a reduced deficit on the operating account compared to last year.

A summary of the year's figures is as follows:

Income this year.	£1225.33
Expenditure	£1326.68
Deficit of	-£101.35

Membership income down
Expenditure items: no real change.

Balance in the bank carried forward is £3838.02.

Monies relating to the Xmas meal and Harrogate Holiday are now paid into our separate Cheltenham Rambling Club Social account.

I would again like to thank Angela Gatcliffe, our Honorary Examiner for examining and signing off the accounts.

Programme Secretary's report from Elizabeth Johnson

Figures for 2022 are in red.

The average number of miles are roughly the same as last year. On Saturday the average is 10, Sundays it is 6, mornings it is 5 and in the evenings it is 4.

Saturdays		Sundays		Mornings		Evenings	
Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range
9.5	6 - 14	6.5	4 - 8	4.9	4 - 7	4 1	2 – 5.5
10	6.5 - 14	6	5 - 7	5	4 – 5.5	4	3 - 5

Average attendances are not much different. On Saturdays, it is about 8 to 9, on Sundays it has risen from 14 to 17. Mornings stay the same at 17 and evenings the same at 14. One can say that attendances on Saturdays are the lowest.

Saturdays		Sundays		Mornings		Evenings	
Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range
8	3 - 15	17	6 - 33	17	4 - 34	14	7 - 24
9	3 - 25	14	8 - 20	17	5 - 36	14	7 - 25

The walks with the highest attendance on a Saturday were both led by Guy and attracted 15 people. On Sunday it was 33 people on a walk of Stephen's, pipping Gordon and Jenny with 32. On the morning walks Lynne came in at 34 on her walk from Seven Springs, and she excelled herself again in the evening with 24 on a walk from Brockhampton.

"No walks" were offered on 13 days, which is an improvement on 2022, with 5 Saturdays, 4 Sundays, 2 mornings, but no vacancies in the evening.

There were 11 cancellations, compared with 8 last year, due to the cold, the heat, and the rain!

Regarding leaders, Carol led from the front with 12 walks, then David and myself, if you count the one we led which was really Guy's, then Mary H, Robert & Janet, Gordon & Jenny, Angela, and Guy himself who all led 8 walks each.

Highlights of the year were festive walks with hats, drinks at the Steam Railway, and garden visits.

Our general knowledge was increased by some informative walks led by Martin W, Deb and Anne B.

The Ramblers Association get-together in April at Birdlip was an opportunity to walk with various groups, with some nice food afterwards. This year, as you can see from the latest programme, it is from Temple Guiting.

Membership Secretary's report from Lynne Hindmarch:

We have had 24 members joining the Club since January. Two are returning members, but the remainder are new to the Club, mostly finding the Club through an internet search, or because friends or family are already members. We warmly welcome them to the Club.

The Club currently has 194 members, which is one more than last year, and 15 more than in 2021.

Below is the up-to-date membership information for 2023, along with the figures from the Annual Reports for the last 2 years for comparison.

Year	2023	2022	2021
Members	194	193	179

Posted Programmes

For the few people who still have posted copies of the Programme, we will have to increase the cost to £11 on top of the membership fee, making a total of £16.50. This is due to increase in the cost of stamps and printing. We will be phasing out the posted programme option at the end of the year.

Cheltenham Rambling Club AGM Website Report from Chris West

During the report period November 2022 to the end of October 2023, we have seen a general decrease of visitors to the website; when comparing the months of this year to the last. I'm not sure why this is, although the cold and indifferent weather during the summer may have been a factor in inspiring fewer people to consider rambling. I've also previously mentioned in last year's report, that existing club members rely on email updates for the full programme and any information on walk changes - so existing members would probably not visit it very often.

Generally, the function of the website is to provide publicity and attract new members, encouraging them to contact the Membership Secretary. The background to this is that the committee does not want the full walk details on the website, because the club is subscription-based and also the understandable security concerns that the walk information, in particular, contains private contact details of leaders and so would not want to make it available online.

Long term, the committee may need to consider how the viewings of our website compare with those for the club Facebook page and also the sign-up platform: Meetup. I have no view of those figures, so I cannot comment. However, they may need to compare and contrast these platforms as a means of reaching potential new members online.

In terms of the overall value of the website; I would argue that the site has a core purpose in providing an easily accessible means of getting basic information about the club, which includes downloadable documents such as the club rules, guidance for leaders, health and safety, reports etc. The committee has updated some of these documents during the year and they are posted on a new page - *Club Essentials*. Overall, the platform still provides an official online presence for a club with a formal constitution and committee - something that social media does not always provide.

Finally, a **big thank you** to those who send in photos. It always helps keep the website looking fresh and is sometimes a good way of saying thank you to your walk leader.

Headline figures for 2022-23:

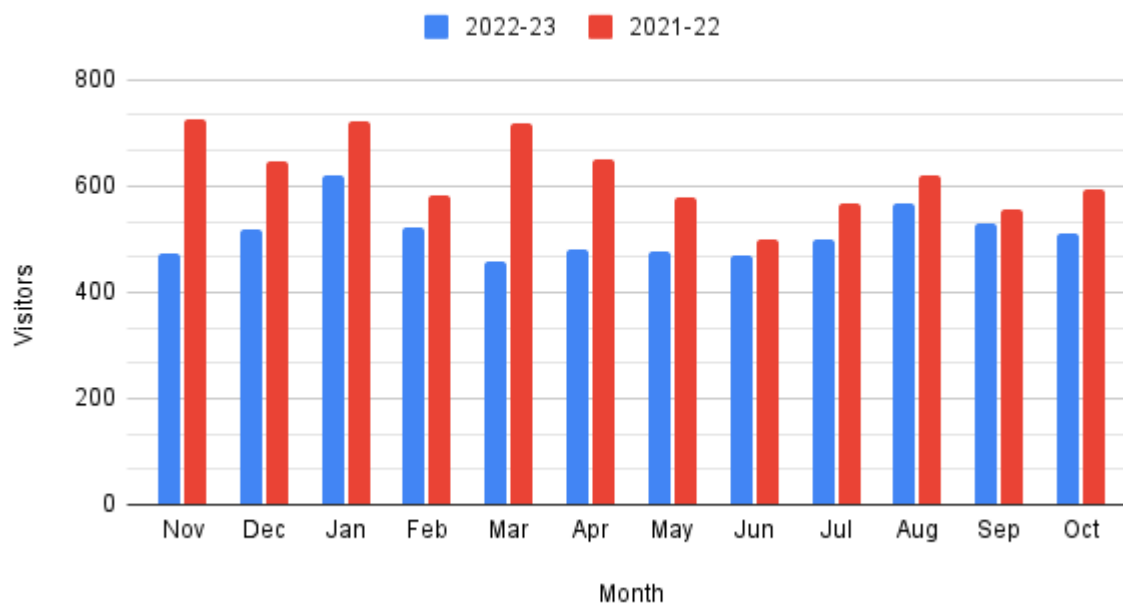
Highest number of visitors – January (619). 14% year-on-year **decrease**.

Lowest number of visitors – March (459). 36% year-on-year decrease.

(Full graph and figures in Appendix)

Appendix:

CRC website visitors comparison: 2022-23 to previous year.



Hosting company comment: This evaluation shows how many visitors accessed the website. Visitors are uniquely identified on the basis of the IP address and the browser ID. If a visitor goes to the website more than once a day, only one visitor is counted.

Health and Safety Advisor's Report from Alan Skidmore:

Alan reported that he was pleased to announce there had been no reported accidents in the past 12 months so he didn't have to make any entries in the Cheltenham Rambling Club's accident book.

Two Club documents have been updated recently; namely 'Health & Safety Guidance for All members' and 'Guidance for Walk Leaders'. These documents can be found on the Cheltenham Rambling Club website under a tab called Club Essentials along with the Cheltenham Rambling Club Rules and the Cheltenham Rambling Club Privacy Policy. All Club members are encouraged to read these documents

The Rambler's Association Report from Michele Holden

Carol welcomed Michele Holden, the Gloucestershire Ramblers Association Area Chair and Walking Environment Officer.

Michele stated that the Ramblers help to defend footpaths and protect the countryside for walkers.

Gloucestershire is one of some 50 Ramblers Areas, with the Cheltenham Rambling Club being an affiliate. The Ramblers represent Gloucestershire Ramblers in policy making, at national meetings, at Ramblers General Council and meet with other organisations such as GCC, Cotswold Trails and Access Partnership, CPRE (Campaign For the Protection of Rural England). They speak out for walkers and represent at local infrastructure consultations with organisations such as National Grid and Keir Construction, and with housing developers such as Bloor, Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon.

In Gloucestershire and around Cheltenham, the key campaigns that Ramblers have worked on this year are;

- Construction has started on the A417 Missing Link. The Ramblers continue to attend meetings with the contractor Kier, to check on access and footpaths within the scheme.
- A footpath alongside some playing fields in Leckhampton that was saved from closure has now reopened and the Wardens helped with a new footbridge.
- Decisions are awaited on the missing mile canal project, the Ecopark and the football stadium near M5 junction 13.
- At Hempstead near Gloucester, funding was allocated from a legacy to improve drainage at a waterlogged path on the Glevum Way at the Gloucester Nature Park.
- In the Cotswolds, Ramblers have been meeting with the National Grid to discuss plans for a project to remove the pylons and bury 4 miles of electric cables between Postlip and Dowdeswell as part of a scheme to improve views in the AONB.
- Along the Cheltenham Circular path, a request was made to the Highways Authority to clear and widen the footway along the A435 (Cirencester road from Cheltenham) - the footway has now been repaired and resurfaced from the Clock Tower up to Seven Springs.
- Ramblers partnered with local people, Open Spaces and Trail Riders to prevent a green lane from closure near Redmarley where obstructions were blocking the route. Cheltenham Magistrates ruled that the lane was necessary and could be enjoyed by the public if the obstructions were removed.
- At Barrow Wake GCC had created a working group to consider options to expand, reduce or close the site to try to reduce anti-social behaviour there. Ramblers attended the sessions and spoke out for those who choose to use this site for recreation, to enjoy the views or start their walks there. As this did not progress to public consultation the site seems to be staying for now.
- There has been an increase in attempts to convert footpaths into driveways within the county (e.g. Wotton under Edge, Nailsworth and Leonard Stanley) and have objected to these with some success – the applications either getting withdrawn or refused. There are six Planning Authorities in the county and Ramblers try to monitor planning applications and respond if there is a negative impact for walkers.
- There are still frequent applications for the development of large solar farms across the county along power lines that are under capacity. The Ramblers response states that these should be suitably located (not in ecologically or visually sensitive areas) with low reflective panels, footpaths maintained with adequate width and wildlife corridors available. Paths and drainage should be restored or improved when construction is complete.
- There are multiple housing and industrial developments in planning which can impact our green space and footpaths. The Ramblers are campaigning for footpaths to be retained along green corridors wherever possible and for green space and suitable access. At Twigworth a footpath was saved from closure.
- A national lost ways programme is under way to reinstate lost footpaths on the definitive map. A team of researchers meet regularly and are preparing claims to file with the GCC. It is estimated there are approximately 250 claims to make in Gloucestershire alone.
- There is a phone App called 'Fix my Street' where problems can be reported.

Carol thanked Michele for her time and attendance.

Election of Officers and Committee Members

The current officers and committee members agreed to remain in post; they were proposed by Angela Gatliffe and seconded by Michele Holden. The current committee was voted in unanimously 'En bloc' as follows:

Chair: Carol Sadie

Treasurer: Judi Noble

Secretary and Health & Safety Advisor: Alan Skidmore

Membership Secretary: Lynne Hindmarch

Programme Secretary: Liz Johnson

Ordinary Member: Jenny Cotterell

Ordinary Member: Janet Aubrey

Angela Gatliffe and Chris West agreed to continue in their respective roles of Honorary Examiner of Accounts and Web Master.

One nomination had been received for Jenny Miller to stand as an ordinary committee member; proposed by Jenny Cotterell and seconded by Gordon Hall. The vote was carried unanimously.

Note: Elizabeth Johnson stated that she will stand down from the role of Programme Secretary at the next AGM as by then she will have been in the role for three years.

A.O.B.

a. Holidays Update:

David Johnson read out details of the Harrogate Holiday to be held from the 28th April to 2nd May 2024 at the Crown Hotel in Harrogate, Yorkshire. There are only 8 single rooms available at a supplement of £25 per person per night which will be allocated by ballot on 24 November 2023. Application details for this holiday were included in the CRC Winter Programme which has been issued. David requested that early applications be submitted for this holiday.

b. Recipients of this year's charitable donations:

The meeting voted to donate the sum of £75.00 to the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and £75.00 to the Cleeve Common Trust.

c. Club Walking Programme simplification:

Guy Vowles addressed the meeting and stated that in his opinion the present programme format should be simplified as there are currently too many walks offered. He suggested a 'laissez faire' attitude should be adopted with 4 weekend walks and 4 mid-week walks offered per month. Carol Sadie stated there is still an appetite for longer Saturday walks and shorter Sunday walks. Guy agreed he would write to the committee.

d. Car Share:

Martin Ward addressed the meeting and raised the subject of car sharing on walks with a visit to a public house at the end of the walk. Following a discussion it was agreed that it is always the driver's decision whether to stop at a pub or cafe after a walk. Ideally the driver should make their intention clear to their passengers before giving them a lift.

e. Christmas Meal:

Lynne Hindmarch addressed the meeting and reminded those present that the Christmas meal is to be held at The Old Courthouse on 6th December 2023. To date 30 people have booked but there is still room for more.

There was no other business.

The Meeting closed at 8.14 pm.

The next AGM will be held in November 2024 at the Victory Club.