

Cheltenham Rambling Club

81st Annual General Meeting held at The Victory Club

11th November 2024 @ 7.30pm

1. Present and apologies

Carol Sadie welcomed everyone and declared the Cheltenham Rambling Club's 81st Annual General Meeting open.

Present: Chairperson, Carol Sadie. Outgoing General Secretary, Alan Skidmore. Outgoing Programme Secretary, Liz Johnson. Membership Secretary, Lynne Hindmarch. Ordinary Members; Jenny Cotterell, Jenny Miller and Janet Aubrey.

26 members + 2 guests + 7 committee = 35

Apologies were received from Judi Noble, Margaret Churchman, Barbara Petit, Peter Green, Simon Slee, David Tomlin, Glynis & Rob Dangerfield, Charlie & Yvonne Milward.

2. Minutes of AGM 2023

The 2023 AGM minutes were agreed as read and approved.

There were no matters arising from the 2023 AGM minutes.

3. Reports

3.1 Chair's Report from Carol Sadie

It feels like it has been another successful year for the club, with a reasonably full programme of walks on offer, generally good turnouts on them and membership remaining at around 190.

We had a good holiday in Harrogate (thanks to David and Liz) and an enjoyable Christmas dinner at the Courthouse (thanks to Lynne and Jenny).

So I would like to say a thank you to all our walk leaders, without whom we would have no walks. Planning a walk and doing walkovers can be time consuming, so we do appreciate leaders taking on this task.

I would also like to thank all the committee for all their hard work throughout the year. Some of the committee roles are very busy and I do appreciate the commitment that is required, so thank you very much.

Looking forward to next year, we are hosting the Gloucestershire Ramblers Walking Together event on Saturday 10th May. I hope that lots of our members will support this event, which is always an enjoyable one, with a large selection of walks to choose from. We will be asking for volunteers to bake cakes for the day, so please let me know if you can help with that.

Finally, I would like to finish with my usual plea. There are still gaps on each programme and only a small group of people leading walks. 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 and I think that you will find club members will be sympathetic and appreciative of any new walk leaders, so please don't be shy of offering!

3.2 Treasurer's Report from Judi Noble

Carol gave the Treasurer's Report on behalf of Judi Noble. As at 31st October the figures for the CRC account were as follows:

Income £1280.02

Expenditure £1203.85

Surplus £76.17

Balance carried forward £3914.19.

The social account balance as at 31st October was £2624.25 which is the deposits for the holiday and Christmas lunch. Thanks were given to Angela Gatliff for auditing the accounts and helping Judi to complete them correctly with a request that she will be agreeable to auditing next year's accounts.

3.3 Programme Secretary's report from Elizabeth Johnson

The average number of miles walked was roughly the same as last year. Attendance has not varied much.

Walks were not offered on 29 days, this compares with only 13 last year. What is really striking is the reduction in the number of Sunday walks offered.

There were just six cancellations this year, compared with eleven last year, presumably due to better weather.

Once more our Chair Carol led the most walks. The highest attendance occurred on walks led by Martin W and Allen Miller, but an attendance of 28 at Gordon Hall and Jenny Cotterell's walk from Birdlip which finished at Ruby's excelled. Maybe this says something about our appetites.

Table 1 Miles walked

Year	Saturdays		Sundays		Mornings		Evenings	
	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range
2023/4	9.4	4.5 – 12	6	5 – 8	5	4 – 6.5	4.5	3 – 5
2022/3	9.5	6 – 14	6.5	4 – 8	5	4 – 7	4	2.5 – 5

Table 2 Attendance on walks

Year	Saturdays		Sundays		Mornings		Evenings	
	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range
2023/4	9.5	2 – 28	12	4 – 22	15	5 – 24	16	8 – 22
2022/3	8	3 – 15	17	6 – 33	17	5 – 34	14	7 – 24

Table 3 No walk offered

Year	Saturdays	Sundays	Mornings	Evenings	Total
2023/4	10	12	6	1	29
2022/3	5	4	2	0	13

3.4 Membership Secretary's report from Lynne Hindmarch

We have had 25 members joining the Club since January. Two are returning members, while 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 187 members, which is 7 fewer than last year.

Below is the up-to-date membership total for 2024, along with the figures from the AGM Minutes for the last 2 years for comparison.

Table 4 People in membership

Year	2024	2023	2022
Members	187	194	193

We have been phasing out posting paper copies of the Walks Programme over the last few years. As I said at last year's AGM, we are stopping posting out printed Programmes altogether at the end of this year, so the Winter Programme is the final one. This decision has a practical element to it, as changes are often made to the Programme during the course of its life, a printed Programme is quickly out of date.

I will be sending out renewal forms to the membership later in the month. After discussing it with the Committee, I will not be asking for you to complete and return the form to me, unless your contact details have changed. I will include a reminder about this on the renewal form.

3.5 Website Report from Chris West

I am pleased to say that during the period November 2023 to the end of October 2024, we have seen a general **increase** of visitors to the website; when comparing the months of the current year to the last. It is not always easy to tell why such trends occur, but since the website along with the club's Facebook page is our means of attracting new members, then this is obviously a good thing. It is usually possible to associate any small increase or decrease in site visitor numbers with periods in variable weather. For example; September showed the least number of visitors this year, probably due to terrible wet weather, which not surprisingly deterred general interest in walking. However, given that we had an indifferent, cooler summer than normal, the broad increase throughout the year is encouraging.

The official club site has a core purpose in providing an easily accessible means of disseminating basic information about the club, which includes downloadable documents such as the club rules, guidance for leaders, health and safety, reports etc. The committee often updates those documents during the year and they are posted on the *Club Essentials* page. Overall, the website platform still provides an official online presence and reassurance of a traditional club structure, with a formal constitution and committee.

Again, a **big thank you** to those who send in photographs. It always helps keep the website looking fresh and accompanying comments are sometimes a good way of saying thank you to your walk leader. Where possible, I try to include these with photos on the home page. This year we have had a steady stream of very interesting photos illustrating a variety of walks – please keep them coming.

Headline website visitor for 2023-24:

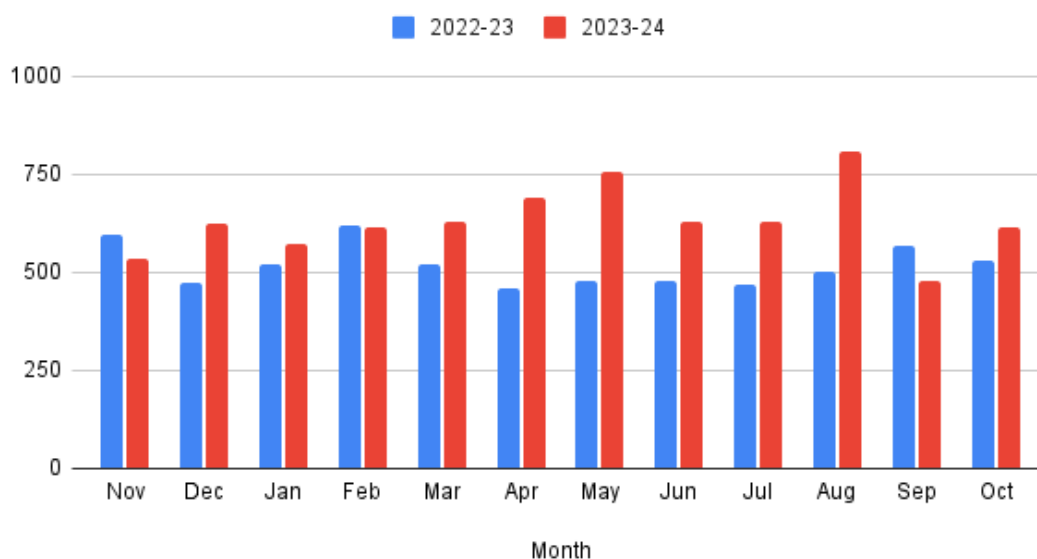
Highest number of visitors – August (808). 62% year-on-year increase.

Lowest number of visitors – September (479). 16% year-on-year decrease.

I am happy to continue maintaining the website for a further year as it is relatively low maintenance. However, if there is someone keen to do the job, I will of course provide help and a period of hand over for them.

Figure 1

CRC website comparison visitor numbers: 2023-24 to 2022-23.



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

3.6 **Health and Safety Advisor's Report from Alan Skidmore**

Alan Skidmore started his report by holding up a yellow book and stated "This is the Cheltenham Rambling Club's Accident Book". He then went on to say that since he took over the "Health and Safety Advisor" role from Stephen Wall at the 2021 AGM, he had not made any entries in the accident book as there had been no reported accidents and he thanked all club members for being careful on club walks.

As we are approaching winter and the Cotswolds are notoriously muddy, please be careful when walking and use walking poles if necessary to avoid slips, trips and falls. Also keep your boots clean which helps to keep your feet dry and keeps the soles free of dried mud to afford better grip.

Alan reiterated Chris West's comment and advised members to read the following two documents which are available on the Cheltenham Rambling Club website as they contain useful information:

- 1) Health and Safety Guidance for all club members,
- 2) Guidance for Walk Leaders.

<https://www.cheltenhamramblingclub.org.uk/club-essentials/>

3.7 **The Rambler's Association Report from Michele Holden**

Carol welcomed Michele Holden, the Gloucestershire Rambling Association's Area Vice-Chair and a member of this Club.

The Ramblers Association is Britain's national walking charity and the affiliation of this club supports our work to defend footpaths, correct the Rights of Way map, and to protect the walking environment in towns and countryside. We speak out for walkers at consultations and meet with organisations such as "Gloucestershire County Council" (GCC), National Highways, National Grid and with Developers such as Robert Hitchens, Bloor Homes, Taylor Wimpey, Kier and Persimmon.

In Gloucestershire near to Cheltenham, key campaigns worked on this year are:

- 1) The A417 Missing Link which has begun construction. Ramblers continues to check on access and footpaths within the scheme. A widened footway has now been installed along the east side of Leckhampton Hill Road to link Ullenwood Manor Road with the A435 crossings as suggested in our responses.
- 2) Consultations for a new junction on the M5 to relieve pressure on the A46 at Ashchurch have recently begun and we are reviewing various proposals.
- 3) The missing mile canal project at J13 and the A419 near Stonehouse is now progressing, however the Ecopark and the Football Stadium on the other side of the A419 are still awaiting decision by "Stroud District Council" (SDC) due to limited capacity of the M5 junctions.
- 4) At a development in Stonehouse we met with the developer Robert Hitchens and retained a footpath in a green corridor off the estate road. There are many local housing and industrial developments that can impact our green space and footpaths. We campaign for footpaths to be retained preferably along their current alignment, within green public open spaces, with suitable width for passing and natural accessible surfaces. We have lodged objections to some housing plans at both Ashchurch and Leonard Stanley near Stonehouse for these reasons while we work to resolve issues with the local councils.
- 5) At Hempsted near Gloucester, works were completed to improve drainage at a waterlogged path on the Glevum Way at the Gloucester Nature Park. This was funded by some generous legacies received.

- 6) Last year, I reported that we had taken a case to court where GCC had applied on behalf of a landowner to extinguish a green lane at Redmarley. We won the case but soon after, GCC made a new proposal to divert the lane around a barn which had been built across it and was obstructing the route. We objected to this proposal which was then withdrawn. Unfortunately, cases do need to be monitored carefully after judgements are made to ensure that they are properly delivered. This can take a lot of time, often months or years before the route is reopened.
- 7) At Barrow Wake the A417 contractor managed to damage the "Site of Special Scientific Interest" (SSSI) and has had to make repairs. Barrow Wake is now part of the A417 scheme and road drainage tanks are being installed there which is why it is closed.
- 8) A national "Don't Lose Your Way" (DLYW) programme to reinstate lost footpaths on the definitive map is progressing. A team of researchers meet regularly and some claims have now been filed with the GCC including one at Claydon Farm near Fiddington where a solar farm is currently being installed. The closing date for claims is currently 1 January 2031, although there may be some further alterations to this by the new government.
<https://dontloseyourway.ramblers.org.uk/>
- 9) The report would not be complete this year without respectful mention of Gerry Stewart, a long time defender of paths and author of several popular promoted routes such as the Gloucestershire Way, Wysis Way and Three Choirs Way. We will do our best to continue Gerry's good works.
- 10) Finally, we look forward to the "Walking Together" event at Witcombe on 10 May 2025 which this club has kindly offered to host for walkers around Gloucestershire.

If you have any Concerns about paths or developments please get in touch.

Thank you for the invitation to speak at your AGM.

4. **Election of Officers and Committee Members**

Some of the current officers and committee members having agreed to remain in post; they were proposed by Alan Skidmore and seconded by Liz Johnson. These were voted for and accepted 'En bloc' as follows:

Chair: Carol Sadie

Treasurer: Judi Noble

Membership Secretary: Lynne Hindmarch

Ordinary Members: Jenny Cotterell and Jenny Miller

The Chair, Carol Sadie explained that two members of the current committee were stepping down these being Alan Skidmore as General Secretary and Liz Johnson as Programme Secretary. Offers to fill the two posts had been received from Janet Aubrey and Allen Miller. Carol asked if anyone had any objections. One member suggested that the members be asked if anyone else would like to fill these posts. Carol explained that they had already been asked and no-one else had come forward to fill any of these posts.

General Secretary: Janet Aubrey was proposed by Lili Baumgart and seconded by Gordon Hall. Voted carried.

Programme Secretary: Allen Miller was proposed by Liz Johnson and seconded by Alan Skidmore. Vote carried.

Ordinary Member: Sally Garland Jones came forward as an ordinary member of the committee and was proposed by Jenny Cotterell and seconded by Gordon Hall. Vote carried.

Alan Skidmore who joined the committee in 2017 and served as Secretary for 6 years and as Health & Safety Advisor for 3 years and Liz Johnson who joined the committee in 2010 and served as Membership Secretary for 9 years and as Programme Secretary for 3 years, were both thanked for their service to the club.

5. **Appointment of Honorary Examiner of Accounts and Web Master**

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

A.O.B.

a). **Holiday update – Criccieth 2025**

Carol reported that 38 people have booked the holiday and there are five people on the waiting list. The hotel has been able to accommodate more single people by allocating them double rooms as singles.

b). **Charitable donations**

There was discussion as to the recipients of this year's charitable donations of £75 to two causes. Roger Swift made the suggestion that the donations be increased by £25 each. Jenny Miller reminded the members that a £50 donation will be made to the "British Red Cross" which is providing the forthcoming First Aid course. A vote was taken on whether the donations should be increased and was undecided. Carol as Chair decided to keep the donations the same at £75 to each of the "Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust" and the "Cleeve Common Trust" and review this again next year.

c). **Other**

Jenny Cotterell addressed the meeting and requested that if there is a cafe or pub stop on a walk and members wish to use its facilities that they also patronise the establishment as hospitality venues are struggling and closing.

She also reminded members that they are advised to contact the walks leader if there is any doubt that due to bad weather the walk may not go ahead. A request was made by Robert that this be done before the day of the walk if possible.

A request was made by Sue Wilson that the programme be issued in two separate parts: one with the general information and the other with the details of the walks and social events, that way members could print less pages. Carol agreed that this would be discussed further at the next committee meeting.

There being no further business the Chair declared the AGM closed at 8.11 p.m.

The next AGM will be held in November 2025 at the Victory Club.

Following the AGM a very interesting talk titled "Cheltenham's Lung: The Long Making of Cleeve Common" was given by a local historian David Aldred.