

RAILWAY RAMBLERS

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2018

The 40th Annual General Meeting of the Club was held at The Henry Robertson Suite, Llangollen Railway Station, Abbey Road, Llangollen, on Saturday 19th May 2018, commencing at 2.05 p.m.

INTRODUCTION AND SEDERUNT

The 36 members attending were Claudia Allen, Bob Bayley, David Bickell, Hilary Blencowe, Lesley Blencowe, David & Sandra Brace, Sally Bramson, Barry Bubb, Tim Chant, Pat Dennison, David & Kazea Godfrey, Nick Hartshorne, Neil and Lisa Hebborn, Gas Hill, Keith Holliday, Chris & Chris Homer, Andy Hutchings, Brian & Angela Jones, Mark Jones, Graham Lambert, Ian Lambert, Larry Latimer, David Lawrie, Keith Lawrie, John Masters, Nigel Nicholds, Chris Parker, Christine Stalham, Paul Thomas, Marion Thornton and Alan White.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Kevin Arnold, Paul Atterbury, Adrian Bonelle, John Brennan, Jonathan Dawson, Phillip Earnshaw, Jane Ellis, Martin Phelan, Bob Spalding, Gareth Thomas, Fred Thornton, Jeff Vinter, Pete Walker and Derek Wilkin.

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS AND REPORT

'On behalf of Railway Ramblers I would like to welcome you once again to our Annual General meeting, a special one as it is our 40th year.

First of all I would like to thank everyone who makes it possible for the club to work in the way that it does. We have an amazing Committee who can work both on their own to carry out their own responsibilities but also collaboratively when required. And to cap it all they are really nice people! Thanks are also due to my work colleagues for covering for me the week I was in Dorset during a teaching week when I wasn't supposed to be off - even my lovely student teacher helped out by taking a class for me. I have promised everyone that I will only do one more year of substantial work so I look forward to confirming that at next years AGM!

As you read this, we are well into the swing of our 40th anniversary as a club and the number of special walks and other events that are taking place to mark this special year. Details of the main event, our 40th anniversary weekend in Sheffield at the end of September, are advertised elsewhere in the magazine and we would love to see as many members as possible come together and celebrate with us.

Alongside the Sheffield weekend, several of our area groups are organising special events. As I mentioned above, a number of members enjoyed all or part of a delightful week of walks in Dorset in April and a particular highlight of our other events is founder member Nigel Willis leading a walk around his old stomping ground of Leicester in September.

The Sheffield event will be our time to look back, reminisce and remember some of the amazing times we have had in Railway Ramblers over the years so I will now focus on a particularly exciting development for the near future. A number of members and Area coordinators have been working with a TV production company involved in making a new series of "Railway Walk" type programmes to be broadcast on Channel 5. These will be presented by Rob Bell; Rob first appeared on our screens in 2012 presenting the BBC2 series 'Engineering Giants'. His most recent

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series, 'World's Greatest Bridges' explores the engineering and historical stories behind some of the planet's most famous structures. Rob is currently also involved in the process of filming a documentary on the '*Flying Scotsman*' so certainly has the credentials to do justice to a programme on our area of interest. I am sure Railway Ramblers will receive appropriate recognition in the programme credits.

Finally a small anecdote to remind members that you never know quite what to expect when heading out to explore an old line. On Good Friday of this year I set out, more in hope than expectation, to try and trace the course of a very old tramway that apparently led west from close to Gathurst Station in an area of beautiful if little-known countryside to the west of Wigan. The line reached the village of Roby Mill and quarries beyond, in operation between roughly 1830 and 1860. I had just stopped to check my map when a man with a black retriever stopped to ask what I was looking for. For some reason I mentioned the tramway, but was amazed when he said "yes I know it: do you want me to show you where it goes?" Four hours later (he did say the dog needed a good walk!) we had followed the tramway's route through a small river valley, around the edge of a derelict golf course built for trainee catholic priests and up to the top of a pair of steep but long abandoned quarries. We also found an excellent pub with good beers and a fine menu where I bought my new friend a well-deserved pint.

So the North West Group's Christmas Walk will now be a walk along or alongside a hitherto unknown line, the Roby Mill and Crisp Delf Tramway, with a festive lunch at the Fox at Roby Mill. You are all very welcome to join us!

Enjoy your summer rambling and I look forward to seeing you 'out there'.

Mark was applauded for his address.

MINUTES OF THE 39th AGM

These had been published on the Club's website and circulated to the members who had requested a printed copy. A summary of the events at the AGM had appeared in Railway Ramblings No.155. A motion to accept the Minutes as an accurate record was proposed by Neil Hebborn, seconded by Graham Lambert and carried unanimously on a show of hands.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Following the Committee Meeting on 7th October 2017 there were no items to discuss that are not covered on the Agenda at this AGM.

REPORTS FROM ELECTED OFFICERS

President

Nick noted the passing of David Shepherd last autumn. He had contacted David's secretary on behalf of the Club and read out the words of thanks he had received in a card from David's widow.

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Vice President

Nick read out a letter received from Paul Atterbury:-

‘Thank you for your letter and the kind invitation to continue as Vice President for RR. I accept with pleasure. ... I plan to join at least two walk soon.’.

Mark confirmed Paul was with us on the recent Bridport and Abbotsbury walks.

Vice Chairman

As a prelude to Derek’s Report Nick noted that the new General Data Protection Regulations were coming in to force on 25th May this year and gave a brief history of the Data Protection Act to the audience including its relevance to Railway Ramblers.

Mark confirmed that the Club had the relevant information, expertise and guidance available to enable us to conform to security requirements. Mark introduced Ian Lambert a new member who will work on a policy to update our privacy and security requirements.

In Derek Wilkin’s absence Mark read out his Report, summarised below:-

Derek noted how the resurgence of popularity in open-air activities, coupled with improved access to the countryside over the last 50 years, has opened our railway history to many not just by walking the long disappeared tracks; our members also value our magazine and railway heritage. Derek’s Report concentrated mainly on the GDPR, covering how we hold and use personal data (members new opt-in requirements), procedures and policy (external accountability/ penalties). He reminded us of the need to avoid broadcast e-mail/ grouped e-mail addresses (use ‘bcc’ instead) and against forwarding e-mail notably with expressed opinions. He conveyed his thanks to the members of the Club for their support during his period in office.

Treasurer

Marion Thornton distributed copies of the Club’s Accounts for 2017 to those present. The Accounts themselves are available from the AGM page on the website to members only.

Marion presented her Report on the Club’s strong financial position. Increased Area activities (and expenses) contributed to a lower surplus in 2017. During the year, no donations were made from the growing Footpath Fund. The Brian Slater Memorial fund had a small donation in 2017; the Yorkshire group are arranging to have a sign placed in Brian’s memory at old Escrick station near York.

Finally, Marion thanked everyone for their support, especially John Brennan for acting as Accounts Scrutineer. She offered to answer any questions including those in writing.

Nick confirmed that he had an offer of an anonymous donation towards Brian Slater’s Memorial

A motion to formally adopt the Accounts was proposed by Gas Hill and seconded by Keith Lawrie.

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Marion was thanked for her role as Treasurer.

Secretary

Nick Hartshorne presented his Report on tasks undertaken in 2017:-

AGM

- Information for the 2017 AGM for inclusion in the Spring 2017 Ramblings.
- Prepared Minutes for 2017 AGM including a summary for Ramblings.

Committee Matters

- October 2017 Committee Meeting – Booked meeting room; prepared and circulated Minutes.

Insurance

- Renewed the Club's Insurance February 2017 and distribution of Certificate.

Administration

- Footpaths - Dealt with information regarding potential new funding opportunities.
- Contacted David Shepherd's Secretary with our condolences and acknowledging his career, and tenure as President
- Initial consideration of effects of forthcoming General Data Protection Regulation on Club.
- Overview of Sheffield hotel 40th Anniversary arrangements.

Membership Secretary

Pete Walker's annual statistical report (attached as an appendix) was distributed to those in attendance and the figures discussed by Mark in Pete's absence.

There had been an overall 3% decrease in membership numbers in the last 12 months with the only real growth in the South West.

Mark was optimistic that the forthcoming new Channel 5 series could have 'the Julia Bradbury effect' with increased new members.

Magazine Editor

Nick read out Jonathan Dawson's Report:

Jonathan sent his thanks to all those who help with the production of the magazine, and to all those who send in contributions. He put out a plea for more rail-related articles and/or letters; for instance, is there anyone out there who would be up for producing an article on one or more of our re-opened stations such as Kenilworth? Does anyone have local knowledge and/or some archive material on when they closed, on the campaign to re-open them, and how the process of becoming disused was eventually reversed? Indeed, have members got ideas for any new features we might incorporate? Are there aspects of our hobby that we are missing? With our Walks Supplement coming up, he welcomed receipt of walk reports. Thank you to those who have made kind remarks about Ramblings.

Following Derek Wilkin's resignation, Neil Hebborn said he was happy to be sub editor of the Walks Programme.

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Magazine Distribution Officer

Mark Jones covered Bob Spalding's Report:

'This has been another year of steadily rising postal charges and this has made our discount ever more valuable!'

Information Officer's Report

Graham Lambert's presented a statistical Report:

41 enquiries had been received in 2017 many about walkable lines. Graham also provided members with advance information about the new Channel 5 programme which will feature presenter Rob Bell walking the route of 6 railway lines lost after Beeching, the impact on local communities and the reuse of the lines themselves.

Webmaster

Nick referred to the key points in Jeff Vinter's Report (see Appendix).

The steady decline in visitor numbers, down by a third, continued throughout 2017 whilst the website costs showed an annual increase of nearly 50%. However our Facebook page is compensating for visitor losses.

A new or revised website such as 'MrSite' with inbuilt adaptability to modern devices had been discussed at the last Committee Meeting in October.

In spite of demands on his own time, including a house move, Jeff had kept the News page up to date throughout the year and made additions to the Photo Gallery.

Jeff is still willing to hand over to a new Webmaster but will continue for another year.

Social Media Coordinator

Nigel Nicholds presented his Report with an update on the Club's Facebook page, now in its fourth year. The number of people who follow our page currently stands at 420 compared to 360 a year ago. If set appropriately Facebook preferences ensure users are notified of any changes to the page Posts have ranged from original photographs and descriptions of RR walks to re-posts of material from other Facebook pages and news articles. Facebook privacy controls, used appropriately and combined with sensible use of Facebook itself, provide sufficient protection for individual users. Members are warmly encouraged to make use of Facebook; he welcomed any feedback and comments to nnrreast@outlook.com.

A comment was made about how RR was publicised; it was suggested there should be more prominence in Ramblings about our Facebook page - maybe something for Jonathan to pick up on?

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SUBSCRIPTION AND CAPITATION RATES

Following Marion's recommendation Mark confirmed there would be no increase this year.

Mark explained the Capitation Rate and how Area budgets were calculated; it will remain at £3.50 per head.

Questions were asked about area number counts where inter area walks were arranged and availability of additional finance. Marion confirmed above capitation would be paid for arranged holidays and it was indicated support would be given for areas with low numbers/development.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTS EXAMINER

Thanks were expressed to John Brennan for his role of Independent Accounts Examiner. John had offered to continue; this was proposed by Tim Chant, seconded by Keith Holliday and agreed.

DISBURSEMENTS FROM FOOTPATH FUND

Nick said there was a need to review and ask for renewal of the amount which the Committee is authorised to grant of up to £500 per annum for the next 12 months from the Footpath Fund by formal consent of those present at the AGM. This was unanimously agreed having been proposed by Lisa Hebborn and seconded by Chris Parker.

At present there was no project earmarked for funding.

Neil Hebborn confirmed that the Nickey Line still had to make a formal request for the funding previously offered for a strimmer.

REPORTS FROM AREA GROUPS

Activities for the 2017 calendar year.

Chilterns

Area Organiser Neil Hebborn spoke of a busy year: with assistance from 8 walk leaders including from neighbouring Areas, 10 events took place including the AGM weekend in St.Albans. Other walks included the Brompton Railway, new branches around Hertford and a first visit to the Horspath and Thame line.

Eastern

Nick read out Derek Wilkin's Report noting that the Eastern Area had covered 6 walks including Lavenham to Sicklesmere; North Walsham to Aylsham, returning on the Bure Valley Railway; Saxmundham to Leiston continuing to Aldeburgh; and former rail routes around Ipswich Docks.

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With 4 other walk leaders, they received most welcome support from adjoining RR Areas. Phil Earnshaw also led the autumn Norfolk Holiday weekend.

Midlands, East

In Phillip Earnshaw's absence Mark Jones reported the Group ran five walks across the region, some well attended, others sadly not. There was a good mixture between footpaths, private land and one ballast walk. At the moment the support does not lend itself to a bigger programme. The highlights of the year included a visit to Edmonthorpe & Wymondham Station and the cuttings of the Bevercotes colliery branch with Boughton Brake Tunnel.

Midlands, South & West

In Bob Prigg's absence Nick Hartshorne noted that the Area had 12 advertised walks with a focus on venturing further afield mainly on a weekday. Bob was pleased with the support shown towards his abandoned canal walks. A small group of Midland members ventured into Scotland yet again on a walking holiday in Ayrshire this time exploring the numerous miles of abandoned coal transportation routes just north of the border.

North East

Gas Hill presented his Report for 2017 noting that formal walks in the area commenced in August with a two day event around Hartlepoons and Seaham including the quayside, each with 9 participants (only 1 local). In November the 3 day Weardale programme, saw 18 to 22 participants on walks in County Durham. In 2017 Gas also contributed to 6 walks in other areas including evening walks in Yorkshire and Lancashire and the never completed line at Tadcaster.

Events in to 2018 give optimism of a growth of membership in the Area. There are currently 8 members but the Area may benefit from extra funding which is restricted under the capitation arrangements.

North West

Mark Jones reported that the Group had enjoyed another successful year with events well patronised including local single day walks, three holidays and short breaks elsewhere.

Close to home the group walked lines from Atherton towards Wigan, the Great Central route through Partington, Appleby to Temple Sowerby in Cumbria and from Chorley to Welch Whittle. A more unusual event was walking the course of the Haweswater Construction road, surveyed and engineered as a railway but tracks never laid. Our main April holiday in 2017 was in Scotland, based around Elgin, Keith and Dufftown. Lines covered included Dufftown to Rothes and Garmouth to Spey Bay. In October we visited Norfolk for a four day break, closely followed by a long weekend in Weardale in Durham.

Scotland

Nick Hartshorne confirmed that he had not received a Report.

Mark Jones said there were plenty of walking opportunities in the Area, with many visits from other Areas in recent years.

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Southern

Keith Lawrie reported another successful year with good turnouts and walks led by 8 leaders. The year began with another Capital Day followed by a re-run of the former Newbury to Didcot line and Hurstbourne Junction to Fullerton Junction both with private sections. Further events took in the Ludgershall Branch including a visit to the former West Grafton station, a trip on the IoW Steam railway and a walk along the former line to Newport, then the line between Canterbury and Whitstable aided by the Crab and Winkle Trust.

A couple of midweek events in July and November were very well attended; the first a morning walk along the former Basingstoke to Alton line was combined with a visit to the Network Rail Training Centre in Basingstoke; on the latter they joined a driver familiarisation Chiltern rail service from Paddington to High Wycombe.

Keith enquired about making a donation to the Crab and Winkle Trust.

Keith gave an update on Kevin's health.

We were informed that long time member Ron Strutt had died. Apart from his involvement in the Isle of Wight Steam Railway, Ron had written a book about the Westerham Branch which is scheduled to be walked.

It was noted that the 2019 Spring Walks led by Phillip Earnshaw will be centred on Eastbourne.

South West

Mark Jones read out Jeff Vinter's Report informing that the Area had staged 1 slide show and 9 railway walks, promoted a railway walk arranged by the Fairlynch Museum in Budleigh Salterton, and supported bus running days in both Exeter and Kingsbridge. The most memorable and well attended event was the walk over the former Kingsbridge branch. This included three station visits, concluding with a cream tea at the beautifully restored Loddiswell station. Using the very same Western National single decker (now in preservation) which took over the Brent-Kingsbridge passenger service the day after the railway closed, access was negotiated for much of the trackbed. Other walks included The Frome to Radstock branch, the Liskeard & Caradon Railway's network on Bodmin Moor and the Yeovil to Langport branch.

Jeff Vinter intends to step down from his post as Area Leader from 2018.

Wales

Chris Parker reported that the Wales Area walks ranged from the Mawddach Trail which is virtually flat to the Rhiwbach Tramway above Blaenau Ffestiniog with over 1000 feet of ascent. The effects of quarrying in that area mean that maps are of limited value and it took Chris Parker 7 "recces" over nearly 2 years to establish the optimum route. The end result was a high point of the year in more ways than one!

It was a particularly busy year with establishing supporting walks for the AGM at Llangollen to prepare in addition to the normal programme. These often turned out to be voyages of discovery. With 5 other leaders contributing to the programme, the number of participants in the year's walks again averaged about 10 ; the largest turnout of 15 being on the Brinore Tramway.

The now long-established non-walking event, the Five Valleys Tour, ran twice with a revised route using the Cambrian lines.

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A disappointment in mid-Wales was that a proposed walk visiting both ends of the Manchester & Milford Railway's abortive Blaenmyherin Tunnel proved to be too long and arduous for a club event.

Yorkshire

In her absence Nick Hartshorne read Jane Ellis' presentation noting that the Yorkshire Area offered a wide variety of events throughout the year with at least one walk per month augmented by slide shows/film evenings. Walks for the less able are covered as well as promoting events run by other groups, which even the non-walker can take part in. The monthly indoor meetings in Leeds this year included a visit by a couple of railway enthusiasts from Australia.

Their walks took in lines built by many different railway companies, and many included guesting walk leaders. They also joined the North West Area for Aberdeenshire and Norfolk breaks, and the North East Area on the County Durham coast. Gas Hill also found time to lead 3 summer evening walks in the Yorkshire area.

The highlight of the year though was the beautiful November weather enjoyed on the North West's long weekend in Weardale taking in the UK's highest railway walk, the remarkable Rookhope Branch including an evening celebrating Fred and Marion Thornton's golden wedding anniversary.

A vote of thanks was proposed for all walk leaders followed by applause.

A 30 minute break for refreshments was then taken.

CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION

There were no changes proposed to the Constitution document.

MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Nick had referred to the passing of Maurice Blencowe earlier in the Meeting. Our Membership Secretary Pete Walker had proposed Life Membership for Hilary Blencowe; this was supported unanimously by the Committee. Maurice held the role of North West Area Organiser before he and Hilary became Joint Magazine Editors. In recent years Maurice had taken part in carrying out reccies and reporting on these. Their long service to the Club was acknowledged. Mark Jones seconded the proposal.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Derek Wilkin had indicated his intention to stand down as Vice Chairman.

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Neil Hebborn had offered to take over. Under the Club's Constitution (2015) this has to be confirmed by Committee at its next meeting.

Jeff Vinter has offered to serve for a further 12 months as Webmaster with no volunteer found to fill the Post. The future of the Website itself will be discussed later in 2018.

Mark Jones confirmed that remaining current post holders of Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Editor, Membership Secretary, Magazine Distribution Officer, Information Officer and Social Media Coordinator had indicated their agreement to continue.

It was agreed that the continuing Committee members be re-elected *en bloc*. Proposed by John Masters and seconded by Ian Lambert.

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT AGM

As per the Constitution, the 2019 AGM will be held on the Saturday falling between the 16th and 22nd May – translating in to Saturday 18th May, 2019.

It had already been suggested that Leeds be chosen as the location for our 41st AGM with Jane Ellis arranging. This was unanimously supported. A meeting room in the City's Cosmopolitan Hotel has since been booked.

A venue in the East for 2020 would be considered further at the next Committee Meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

GDPR

As referred to under the Vice Chairman's Report, the Club will review and adopt a Privacy Policy and process very soon.

40th Anniversary

Mark outlined the event based in Sheffield with walks on 4 days - 27th to 30th September and evening events at the Royal Victoria Hotel; on the Friday night there will be slides/films/reminiscences (offers to do a 15 minute slot welcome) and a dinner on the Saturday night (35 to 50 people in the room but could extend) . Deposits for the meal are £10 per person payable to Mark Jones.

Gas Hill noted delegates rates for accommodation were available at the Hotel with 3 further hotels in the canal basin.

President

The Committee had considered the appointment of our founder Nigel Willis would be appropriate. Nick will write to Nigel with an invitation to our 40th event with proposal. A formal appointment of the position will be at next AGM.

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Walks Programme sub editor

Following Derek Wilkin's resignation, Neil Hebborn said he was happy to be sub editor of the Walks Programme; once formatted this will go back to the Areas for checking.

Weekend Walks and Transport arrangements

Chris Parker advised that gaiters and poles may assist the Sunday walkers. He referred to train times. Chris |Homer noted bus restrictions on a Sunday. Chris said all cars may be needed for the Monday afternoon walk.

The meeting closed at 4.15 p.m.

Appendices

All of the following **will be** published on the club's website:

- Appendix 1 – Accounts 2017
- Appendix 2 – Membership Secretary's Report
- Appendix 3 – Webmaster's Report

Full Copies of Officers and Area Reports

These are available by e-mail from the Club Secretary