

**FRESHFIELD RAMBLERS  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2023 – 8.00pm  
at Formby Cricket Club**

**Chairmans opening welcome to 29 attendees**

Thank you all for being here.

For myself I have been unable to go on proper walks for some months now (I did have 2 short walks in Caernarfon), so this is a time for me to catch up with old friends and perhaps meet new members who for me have just been a name on the walk sheet.

This meeting is the time to find out how well (or otherwise) the club is working. If there are issues let's have them. If we don't know about it, we can't mend it.

You see the agenda before you but this is not set in stone. Feel free to comment as we go through the order. At the end, AOB is just that. If you have a topic to discuss, or just feel you have something to say, this is your slot.

**Apologies for Absence**

The treasurer who was ill and 9 other members

**Minutes of the last AGM on 8 November 2022**

P Lally said the discussion on Coach Organisation was not in the minutes. He would raise it again under AOB. Subject to that the minutes were agreed

**Financial Report and adoption of 2022/23 accounts**

The chairman apologised for the Treasurer's absence. He would use her written notes. He apologised to the meeting as the accounts circulated were a mess and the copies left on the tables still contained errors although the important items, surplus for the year and the bank account details were accurate. He did have the advantage that the treasurers report had been presented and approved at the committee meeting the previous week and the committee members would no doubt put him right if he made any mistakes.

The main items were;

- It had been a better year than expected and there was some scope to reduce the measures taken in the immediate post covid recovery, although any reductions would need to be limited. We were still several hundred £ down on the pre

covid Bank balance and some way below the level of reserve she thought appropriate. It was our healthy reserves that allowed us to get through the losses made as we slowly returned after covid.

- Her priority was to increase the drivers tip and increase recce expenses. The volunteered reductions made in these items had been a great help in difficult times. She was suggesting a £10 increase in both to £40.
- On coach costs if current trends continued there may be scope to reduce the coach charge from £16 to £15 in a few months' time. It would depend on the level of reserves, coach bills for the next year, and the level of increases in other costs due to recent high inflation and to maintaining the increased numbers on the coach.
- She intended to leave the annual membership at £20. In some ways the annual membership was more important than coach fees in one sense as it was the only element that was fixed, not associated with costs and because it came in usually within 2 months it was a major factor in planning cash flow.

The chairman asked the meeting to approve the Treasurers report. The first item driver and recce expenses were approved.

Mike Higgins then asked that we reduce the annual membership fee to £10. There then followed a rather unstructured discussion/argument The main points were;

- Mike said our bank balance £3000 approx was very healthy and the club had no need to keep gathering in more from the members.
- Bill Carr said this was our first surplus after several years of loss. The fees agreed already would reduce any surplus by £480 and the proposed reduction in annual subs by £640 together with other cost increases could reduce us back to a loss next year. In his experience from finance most small organisations collapsed through poor cash flow not having enough reserves to survive unexpected cost increases or unforeseen external factors even though they on paper were not loss making. His view was that by ignoring the Treasurer's report that had been approved by the committee and reducing the membership fees now would be an unnecessary risk .
- Several of the members that had been members at Range said that was what caused their collapse, the lack of reserves

- Alan O'Leary said £20 was not a lot to pay for membership, was in line with other local walking groups and we had not received any complaints about it.

After a wide discussion the Treasurer's report was not accepted and a figure of £15 was to be the membership fee following a vote by the members present.

## **Appointment of Club Officers**

### **Chairman**

JA asked the members if anyone was interested in taking over the Chairman's role. No one came forward. JA was thanked by all for doing a sterling job.

### **Honorary Secretary**

Currently shared between three committee members. No changes proposed

### **Honorary Treasurer and Auditor**

CA had agreed to continue in office and thanked for all her hard work. CA had said current club financial auditor (Bob Theakson) would continue in his role. The Chairman thanked the committee for their efforts and hard work over the last year.

### **Appointment of Committee**

Sandra Spencer had resigned and Ray Webb had agreed to be co-opted onto the committee. The Chairman asked if anyone else was interested and Liz Bellman was proposed. Both changes were approved.

### **Walk programme for next year.**

Derek Hesketh (DH), lead walk leader, briefly ran through the list of proposed walks circulated. There was a discussion about Ironbridge being too far. The list was accepted by the meeting without any changes. In response to a question DH said It was intended to return to previous years' practice of having a walk leader meeting each autumn to discuss the walk programme for the following year and any other issues.

### **AOB**

The following suggestions had been sent by members for AOB at the AGM.

- **Provision of Accounts on every table.** This was done each year but number of copies to be increased. This had been done.
- **Liz Bellman's suggestion of a WhatsApp group** for use on walk days. She will go ahead with organising.
- Derek gave an introduction to the **new Facebook page** for the club. A work in progress that is not designed to replace but to fit in with the current website
- **Proposal that all walkers carry emergency details in their rucksacks.** This had been done several years ago using tubes provided by the Lions for all. The chairman will organise medical tubes from Crosby Lions if still available and will also collect the first aid kits to check them over. We could if funds allow repeat the first aid training organised by St John's ambulance for members interested.
- **Feedback on the Caernarfon Hotel weekend,** success? Worth repeating? General approval about the hotel used and the value for money, some discussion of a bunkhouse weekend. MH will look into practical possibilities and timing of one or both. The Chairman thanked MH for all the work done arranging the weekend.
- Members are reminded that **our pickups are early on a morning** where a lot of neighbours would like to have a lie-in. So, we should be mindful of this and make as little noise as possible whilst waiting for the coach. There have been rumblings about this at one of our pick-ups. In discussion Ao'L said that he had been approached at Thornton by a resident.
- BC said one item in the treasurer's report had been missed, the **switch of club's bank account to Santander** from HSBC. Chairman said this was a work in progress. Meeting agreed that this be pursued.
- When **booking a coach place** remember to say which pickup point you use (and who you are!). Non-members wanting to book on coach go initially on a reserve list. They will take a confirmed place 10 days before walk date. It was suggested this be increased to two weeks.
- Derek's informal **post-Christmas walk** will take place on 29th December, route TBA. A suggestion of a walk in Chester was well received.
- Phil Lally criticised the **recent coach communication** arrangements. There were no announcements and there was no one counting those on the coach when leaving venues or after toilet stops. We used to ask members on the coach which walk they wanted to do and then try to juggle numbers if needed. (this last point had been stopped deliberately after a discussion by walk leaders quite some time ago as unnecessary). We also needed

someone (not a walk leader) to announce any communications needed re coach parking, leaving times and counting numbers after stops. The chairman agreed we needed to revisit the arrangements.

Bill Carr