



RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION: NORWICH GROUP

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT TOWN GREEN CENTRE, WYMONDHAM

SUNDAY 16th NOVEMBER 2025

Present were: Nigel Whitlam (Chair), Peter James (Secretary), Gerald Brooker (Walks Co-ordinator), Marita Bulto (Communications Officer/Trips Away Coordinator), Mark Lankester, Barbara Whitlam, Judith Thomas, and 11 non committee members.

The Chair welcomed everybody and opened the meeting at 14:00 hrs.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Heidi Elliott and Steve and Janet Bensley.

Minutes of the 2024 AGM

The minutes had been available on the Norwich Ramblers website. There were no objections or comments. Proposed by Judith Thomas seconded by Barbara Whitlam.

Matters arising from previous Minutes

There was nothing significant to bring forward to this meeting.

Chair's Report

Firstly, I must thank those who have served on the committee over the past year, both committee members and our minute secretary.

I must then thank all the walk leaders for the time they have given up in recceing walks, putting the walks into the programme and then leading them. This applies to their efforts in respect of both walks in our area and on trips away. Without their efforts, Norwich Ramblers would not exist. The number of members we have in the Norwich Group is testament to their efforts. Thank you also to all those members who turn up to walks on a regular basis.

Thank you to those who participate in work party activity in connection with paths and bridges under Peter's excellent leadership.

The Chair asked for a huge round of applause for the above and anyone he may have forgotten for their sterling efforts on behalf of us all.

The walks programme has contained some excellent walks again this year. The number of walks month by month has varied and I must stress the need for existing walk leaders to continue to put walks into the programme on a regular and timely basis and the need for new walk leaders to come forward. There are green shoots appearing, with a few new leaders putting walks into the programme. Existing walk leaders will be more than happy to mentor any individual who may wish to put their name forward as a new leader, albeit they will need to complete the new Ramblers training before they can lead.

Turning to the away trips, the four trips in 2025 have again been a tremendous success, being well attended and consisting of some excellent walks. The feedback from participants has been excellent. The collaboration with individuals from other areas in recent times has continued to bring significant benefit and there is every reason to expect that the success of the away trips will continue, albeit that we do need more people to come forward to organise and lead trips.

2025 saw Norwich Ramblers co-organise with Hike Norfolk the walks and social event held to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Ramblers. Nine Ramblers groups from across Norfolk were represented at the event and excellent feedback was received from the groups. We also co-organised, again with Hike Norfolk, the recent CPR training and walk leader open day. I must thank my friend Adrian Johnson, chairman of Hike Norfolk, for his ideas and hard work in connection with the two events. The benefit of co-organising is that we have more people to help with the events and the costs are shared.

Treasurer's Report

The 2024-25 financial year, running from the start of October to the end of September was uneventful compared to the previous year, primarily due to the cessation of the £5 per trip deposit. A further factor was the limited number of items of expenditure. As a result this report will be brief.

The bank balance at the end of the financial year, 30th September, was £1,599.32 with £5 held in cash. This compares with the bank balance at the end of the previous year of £1,623.82 with £5 held in cash.

During the course of the financial year revenues amounted to £956.78, comprised mainly of money from the Ramblers Association (£639), RWH Travel (£190) and the return of the deposit from the last AGM of £100.

Expenses over the course of the financial year amounted to £981. The vast majority of this was refunds to walk leaders for trips. As you may remember, there was a £5 deposit per away trip up to the end of 2024. By the end of the previous financial year there was a positive balance of £902. After some discussion it was decided to reimburse walk leaders £9 per night they stayed in the trip venue.

Aside from the reimbursement to walk leaders', expenses during the year were extremely small, comprising the hire of venues for committee meetings, 90th anniversary, and the AGM venue. Aside from this there was a small gift to a local leader of one of the trips away.

Secretary's Report and Membership

Membership numbers have changed little, at 537 and 5 affiliates. Approximately 30 new members gained but lost a similar number. A lot are members who don't walk, or who walk with the Wensum group, but are still members of Norwich Ramblers.

Walks Co-ordinator's Report

Thanks to all leaders for putting on walks, it is much appreciated. There are still issues getting walks on the programme in advance, despite efforts by himself and Nigel. The trips away have been very successful.

Marita reported on the progress of the training now required for leaders. She has been through the list of leaders for Norwich, removed about 50% who no longer lead, and contacted those who have not yet done the training. Another 7 have just completed it. She does not have the current number of leaders. All ramblers groups have the same problem, with substantial numbers not having trained (half within Norwich). Some have started but have modules still to complete. Some on the list may not want to lead again so will not do training.

In the last committee meeting it had been decided that we should have a short list of parameters for leading walks, so there is consistency in how walks are led, particularly on trips away. For example, large groups should be on the left when walking on a road, with hi-vis worn by the leader and back marker. This does not always happen. It was pointed out that the leader training advice is sometimes at odds with what we tend to do, ie we lead from the front but they suggest mingling within the group. There was a discussion in committee covering recent dangerous events on walks, both in Norfolk and on trips away. The leader being at the front and checking out the route would mitigate these. Nigel stressed that on trips away the walks are still under the auspices of Norwich ramblers and there had been a couple of events recently that shouldn't have happened. However he doesn't want to put people off leading. The training also recommends 1 leader per 10 walkers, which would not be practical in groups of our size. Marita asked people to contact her with any ideas to go on the suggested list of parameters. There is now a WhatsApp group for leaders and Phil suggested Marita asks for ideas via that.

Gerald is willing to offer navigation training with a course adhering to the National Navigation Award Scheme. It will follow the content of the scheme but there will be no certificate, as Gerald is not qualified to train, but has years of experience and has completed the awards himself. The training will be 4 to 1, and will be offered to leaders and members who are interested.

Communications Report

The Facebook group is working well, but is not used in the way it had been hoped. Marita had thought there would be more conversations looking for shared accommodation, lifts to walks/trips away and selling equipment for example. The meeting generally said they hadn't realised this was an option, so hopefully it may be used in this way in the future.

A community WhatsApp is being used on trips way. There is an announcement page but subgroups can also be created for various other aspects, such as car sharing, photos, etc, which people can opt to join.

There is a car sharing group for Norwich ramblers' use locally.

Marita has been emailing leaders re training, and is also in contact with head office a lot (they have been very helpful).

In January a campaign is being started to recruit more path maintenance volunteers, in time for next season's work. Plan to distribute leaflets in libraries, etc. People do not need to be a member of the ramblers to do this.

Trips Away Report

Another very successful year, with four trips away. Two with other groups: Wiltshire and Dorset. Peter Bradford (Dorset) put together a fantastic programme with a huge amount of information he researched and delivered. The Lake District in May was incredibly successful, with 60 people. Despite this there were not huge numbers on any of the walks. People take days out to do other things, but, out of respect for the leaders, Marita would like people to walk as much as possible. All next year's trips are now on the website. There will only be three trips unless someone immediately offers to help Jonathan with a trip to Devon: Lakes, Brecon and Peak District (going for a week Friday to Friday, so long weekenders can still do it, based in Castleton).

Marita is going to get two sets of walkie talkies, specifically for trips away, although they could also be used in Norfolk and will be trialled here. Roulla asked about the use of whistles but there was concern they would be seen as a distress signal and in somewhere like the Lakes there would be too many other walkers around who may be concerned. But, could be useful locally if a walk gets too strung out or split in the middle. Maria pointed out that the leader should not lose sight of the back marker, stopping to let people catch up, so the situation should not occur.

Election of Officers

At the last committee meeting all officers said they would be happy to stay in post, but if there is anyone who would like to be considered for a position they are available to all members. No reaction.

Chair: Nigel Whitlam. Proposed by Susan Bennett, seconded by Jonathan Wilby
Vice-Chairman: None currently. Judith Thomas happy to stand. Proposed by John Wood, seconded by Susan Bennett
Treasurer: Jonathan Wilby. Proposed by Barbara Whitlam, seconded by Marita Bulto
Secretary: Peter James. Proposed by Phil Harbord, seconded by Marita Bulto
Walks Co-ordinator: Gerald Brooker. Proposed by Nigel Whitlam, Seconded by John Wood
Communications Officer: Marita Bulto. Proposed by Jonathan Wilby, seconded by Portia Griffey
Trips Co-ordinator: Marita Bulto. Proposed by Susan Bennett, seconded by Maria Holland

Heidi Elliott, Barbara Whitlam and Mark Lankester are happy to remain on the Committee. They were proposed by Portia Griffey and seconded by John Wood.

Sue Lankester has stood down as Social Events Coordinator. Heidi is happy to help out but a coordinator is needed. It is an important role and could involve a lot of work, for example if Christmas meal was reinstated. Portia was prepared to do it for a year, with help from Heidi and Sarah. Proposed by Susan Bennett, seconded by John Wood. Roulla asked about how it worked, and a brief explanation was given. Susan pointed out that Friday evening was not an ideal time for single people to go out. It was suggested that something could be put on Facebook about sharing lifts to social events.

It was explained to the meeting that the shadowing of committee roles had been discussed and a system was being put in place to ensure there is a back up for the main roles to give continuity when the holder resigns, and also to share the load. Mark Lankester taking part in this.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

Jill Moates happy to continue. Proposed by Gerald, seconded by Jonathan Wilby.

Any Other Business:

Phil queried the £900 going out to trip organisers. It was stressed that it was a one-off and will not appear again. Bev queried whether there was any other way to recompense people doing recces. There was no practical way of doing so as either the amount was too meagre to be worth it, or Norwich Ramblers have to charge so much for going on the trips it becomes a travel company.

The meeting ended 14.59

Signed
Nigel Whitlam: Chairman

Following the conclusion of the meeting, Susan Bennett spoke to the chairman and stated that she had given thought to joining the committee, but it was now too late. The chairman advised that she could be co-opted onto the committee and this could happen at the next meeting. Susan agreed to attend the next meeting.