

## The Ramblers Association (Lancaster Group)

### Minutes of the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Group, held at 7pm on 16 November 2010 at the Friends' Meeting House, Lancaster

1. **The Chairman, Brian Jones, welcomed** those members who were present and thanked them attending the A.G.M.
2. **Apologies:** Iris Birks, Brian Cornish, Liz Evans, Lois Louden, Audrey Shaw, and several others
3. **Minutes of 2009 A.G.M:** The minutes of the A.G.M held on 10 November 2009 were read and approved.
4. **Matters Arising:** None
5. **Treasurers Report:** The treasurer, John Westhead, gave a report on the audited Balance Sheet (copies of which had been provided for those present). He noted that the Group's finances were in good order, showing a surplus of income over expenditure which came almost entirely from the sale of the Group's walking books. It was because we raised so much money from our book sales that we were able to make donations towards the cost of two new seats on the Wyre Way and will shortly be making one towards the cost of a new bridge on the Dales Way. Finally, he was happy to report that the final figures for this year showed a balance of £3,945 'cash in hand' in the Group's bank account.
6. **Secretary's Report:** None - as the secretary's post is still vacant. The Chairman said this was presenting the Group with a serious problem. He would, however, like to thank Gill Gale for volunteering to 'take in' the Group's mail for the past year. .
7. **Footpath Secretary's Report:** Joy Greenwood said that, after a year in this post, she was grateful that she had inherited such an efficient system from the previous occupant, Gill Gale. She also wished to extend her thanks to all those members who had helped with footpath surveys. In particular she would like to thank Lois Louden for all the effort she had put in walking and reporting on the paths in our area. Our area covers parts of three counties but it now looks as if 'Rights of Way' work will still be maintained by local authorities. During the past year our Group made a visit to the Yorkshire Dales National Park Centre at Hawes, where we were very welcome by the local Ranger, who took us on a walk to demonstrate all the different problems they had to deal with in maintaining the local footpath system. Back at the office we were also given a demonstration of their very impressive computer system, which provides them with a continually updated record of any problems on local rights of way and also permissive paths. He told us that thanks to the smooth operation of this system most problems in the Yorkshire Dales were dealt with fairly quickly. Turning to our own county, Joy said that here we had not been so fortunate - as fewer reported footpath problems had been cleared in Lancashire than had been the case in 2009. However she was pleased to report that the County Council was planning to replace a number of 'awkward' stiles with kissing gates instead.
8. **Chairman's Report:** Brian Jones gave an account of recent developments with regard to the new Coastal Path. A pilot scheme would be starting shortly on the stretch running along the Cumbrian Coast and later the Group's area of the Lancashire Coast from Silverdale to Cockerham. The Group would be undertaking much of the work involved in planning that part of the route which lies in our area. We would for instance be walking its entire length as well photographing it, and drawing attention to potential problems, etc. All this will be very time consuming and he hoped that members who could find the time to help with this work would volunteer their services. The Chairman also informed those present that the Group was planning to become involved with the local authority in organizing 'Easy Health Walks', aimed not only at those with mobility problems, but also those recovering from illness or injury who could benefit from gentle regular exercise. The Group was already drawing up a list of 'easy walks' and would probably also offer to lead some of them. Finally he would like to thank the following for all the work they had done in the past year; Cicely Pickles for organising the walks programme, and of course all our voluntary leaders who actually led them; Gill Gale and Mary Garner for arranging for arranging trips to Youth Hostels, etc; Sandra Todd, who had done such a good job in creating our web site; and last but not least his wife, Sheila Jones, our book sales organiser who, incidentally, was always grateful to hear from members who could suggest new sales outlets;
9. **Election of Officers and Committee:** (a) The Chairman, Brian Jones, Treasurer, John Westhead, and Footpath Secretary, Joy Greenwood, were all re-elected unopposed. No nominations had been received for the post of Secretary - so, for the time being, Gill Gale would continue to accept any mail addressed to the Group, and Dorothy Phillips would continue to take the minutes at committee meeting. (b) The Chairman said that the present committee (with the exception of Steve Hawes - who had resigned) were willing to stand again. There being no other nominations the following were therefore re-elected to the committee: Hilary Bellis, Norma Benathan, Gill Gale, Mary Garner, Ray Peel, Dorothy Phillips and Cicely Pickles. (c) The meeting agreed to re-elect Ann Donnelly as independent auditor.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the formal part of the proceedings.

He then invited those present to stay for a talk on the Forest of Bowland AONB given by Michael Pugh, the Business Development Manager. This was a most informative and interesting account of the AONB itself and the work involved in preserving this beautiful landscape - yet at the same time catering for the needs of both local people and those visiting the area in search of recreation. The role of the AONB in supporting local businesses was emphasised.

There then followed refreshments.