

Mendip Group Ramblers Association
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
At Holcombe Village Hall Thursday 29th January 2026

1. **Present** Janet Morland, Gill Moxey, Alice Lock, Mo Bennett, Margaret Pugh, Les Stather, Gus Halfhide, Lesley Chir, Barbara Chorley, Trevor Letcher, Lucy Rowntree, Hilary Stirling, Claris Brown, Jane Dyson, Tony Dyson, Mike Plaskitt

Apologies Connie Moore, Mary Perry, Tony Strange

2. **The minutes of the last AGM** held on Thursday 28th January 2025 were accepted.

3. **Chairman's Report** – see below, including report from Tony Strange at West Mendip Ramblers.

4. **Treasurers report/Balance Sheet** – see below:

It was suggested that we should be spending some of our residual money by offering First Aid training. West Mendip may have a useful contact.

5. **Membership** – Claris has 253 members on her list not including West Mendip.

There is concern that our walks now only attract 10-15 walkers, though the group were generally not in favour of a return to the 30+ people we attracted before Covid. Lucy and Jane pointed out that there are a number of active smaller walking groups in the Mendip area, unconnected to Ramblers, so there are still people walking, but maybe elsewhere. Connie's analysis of the program shows that there were walks offered for most Thursdays and Sundays throughout 2025, but some of these were at short notice.

The lack of a preplanned forward program was considered a problem, as West Mendip plan theirs further in advance and members will see their walks first. It was always difficult getting leaders to commit more than a couple of months ahead even in the days of the 4 monthly printed program, and we currently don't have anyone to nag leaders into committing. Tony sent round a list of walk dates for the next 2 months and asked leaders to sign up to dates. Going forward Mo has volunteered to follow this up, to try to get an 8 week rolling program. When asking walkers to lead who have not done so before we can offer them help with recce and planning. Margaret suggested that walk leaders should announce program gaps before a walk and encourage people to fill them.

Most of the members in the room had completed the Ramblers training.

Les will send the AGM minutes as a mass mailing, and canvas the membership regarding forward planning of walks.

Trevor asked if he should continue to offer short walks, as on some occasions he has only had 1 participant. We agreed these were still very valuable for walkers who might not be able to join our other walks.

6. **Election of Officers**

Mike Plaskitt was reappointed chairman, Jane Dyson reappointed as Secretary, Tony Dyson reappointed as Treasurer, proposed by Lucy Rowntree seconded by Margaret Pugh.

Other tasks will be divided amongst the committee as now.

7. **AOB**

Committee meeting dates will be put on the event list on the website to encourage other

members to attend. Our next meeting will be held after a walk, in a suitable hostelry. The Ramblers Training suggests that all walkers should have emergency contact details with them – ICE cards are available. Following the Ramblers safety training, there should be a sign in list for every walk.

Date of next Committee Meeting:

Thursday 12th February 2pm at the Swan at Rowberrow.

Lucy will arrange the walk.

Chairmans Report

The walk programme is still suffering from the after effects of long covid. We seem to be able to fill most Thursdays and Sundays, but mostly at short notice, and I see no prospect of returning to a printed 4 month programme.

However we have a Thursday walk we get up to 20 people and sometimes about 12 on a Sunday, so we are doing well in the circumstances. West Mendip are doing much better.

There are some groups that have split off to walk in smaller numbers, and this has exacerbated the leader shortage, but at least they are walking.

There are a number of issues that the committee has been addressing, such as the lack of leaders, and how to contact members in the absence of a printed programme or email address.

Communication will be largely via the website, which has been updated to make it more phone friendly, and by email where appropriate, but that still leaves some members uncontactable. We do not have a solution to that yet.

The work party continues on most Tuesdays, and some new members have joined us, reducing the average age, giving hope that the work will continue when us oldies have to retire. Tony and Les of course are mere youngsters.

Those that came enjoyed the festival although numbers were again down

We will have chance to look at reports during the meeting, but I would just like to thank all those who have contributed to the running of the group in any way, and hope that we can build on success to get back to a new normal this year.

If anyone was listening last year you will have noticed that this report is almost word for word last years. Recycling is fashionable, but things have changed little in the 12 months, including my dodgy knees.

Report from West Mendip

West Mendip Walkers was formed in 2012 and at the outset was, by agreement, affiliated with Mendip Ramblers, and in 2025 formerly became a sub group of Mendip Ramblers. The Group is overseen by a Steering Committee currently consisting of seven members:

Chair - Tony Strange (liaison with Mendip Ramblers)

Walks Manager - Mike Gorman

Membership Secretary - Jenny Williams

Ordinary members - Paul Reynolds (provides support for walks and training); Lynsey Ward; Euan Stanwix and Prof Hugh Baker.

The Steering Committee meets four times a year, and minutes of each meeting are distributed to the Group's members.

The Group meets every Thursday, and walks vary from 7 to 14 miles across Somerset county, west Wiltshire, Dorset and Devon. We also have a number of overnight trips typically Exmoor and Dartmoor plus others from time to time. We have also introduced a number of Tuesday social walks (one per month) which are shorter e.g. 5 - 7 miles.

We have a burgeoning membership and all bar four new members have completed the Walk Leadership Foundation training. All regular members of the group are asked, indeed encouraged, to lead walks which includes participants in the shorter walks who are also required to have completed the online Ramblers Association training. Our view is that it is not unreasonable to ask regular walkers to take their turn in leading walks. Sharing walk leadership takes the pressure off everyone and as most of our members are trained walk leaders members are only likely to lead three walks every two years.

- Training was generally well received after a bit of grumbling. The incident session was especially pertinent as we've had some incidents this year. Greater awareness in the group around first aid, having a walker list, back markers, and allowing walk leaders to take charge when incidents occur (see below!)
- Thanks to Les & team for installing kissing gates in many locations - much appreciated
- Thanks also to Les for his work supporting local groups with getting footpaths reopened etc. He has been a great support for our footpaths group in Witham Friary

L.E.A.D. 'Respect the leader, work as a team'

L — Look & assess

Who's hurt, what happened and what risks exist? Walkers must respect the decisions taken by the walk leader and not countermand or issue instructions.

E — Ensure safety

Keep the group together in a secure area, prevent further risk and avoid walkers wandering off. The injured party is kept comfortable and reassured.

A — Assign & act on role

Assign roles according to the skills of others, if needed. Tell people exactly what is required of them: call for help and get supplies where necessary.

D — Direct calmly

Communicate with the group calmly and confidently. Keep everyone informed. Once the situation is under control, you may agree that a subgroup can continue the walk under a competent leader, but until such time walkers are to stay together

I do not expect next year's report to be as lengthy!

Mendip Ramblers Statement of Accounts as at 30/09/2025

Opening balance

01/10/2024

Restricted Funds	£3,714.53	Workparty Donation	£3,163.53
		Book Sales	£551.00
Self-Funded	£3,493.25	Holiday pre-payments	£0.00
		Holiday Residuals	£3,493.25
General Funds	£2,705.44	Social Residuals	£0.00
Total	<u>£9,913.22</u>		

Income

Area Funding	£458.10	4 of 4 quarter payments
Ramblers Hols	£90.00	
Deposit Interest	£0.00	
Fundraising	£269.94	Walk festival donations
Holidays	£6,080.00	
Socials	£0.00	
Work Party Donation	£2,205.00	
Book Sales	£0.00	
Total Receipts	<u>£9,103.04</u>	

Expenditure

Courses	£0.00	First Aid course	
Walking Festival	£270.00	Hall Hire	
Festival Prog/Publicity	£0.00		
Walking Group Costs	£44.99	Flowers for Peggy	
Tools	£471.66		
Work party costs	£257.60		
Trailer Insurance etc	£0.00		
Meeting/AGM Costs	£12.00		
Admin	£1.50		
Holidays	£6,188.00		
Socials	£0.00		£0.00 From Social Residuals
Total Expenditure	<u>£7,245.75</u>		£729.26 From workparty donations

Funds as at 30/09/2025

Restricted Funds	£5,190.27	Workparty Donations	£4,639.27
		Book Sales	£551.00
Self Funded	£3,385.25	Holiday pre-payments	-£108.00
		Holiday Residuals	£3,493.25
		Social pre-payments	£0.00

		Social Residuals	£0.00
General Funds	<u>£3,194.99</u>		
Total Funds	<u>£11,770.51</u>		
At bank	£11,770.51		
To bank	£0.00		
Awaiting presentation	<u>£0.00</u>		
Total	<u>£11,770.51</u>	£0.00	
		£0.00	

Footpath Officers report

WN4/6. North Brewham – The route of the path has been agreed but not yet certified on the ground. Last year I reported that I was hopeful that this would be resolved in the next few months. This path has been a problem for over 15 years. I was informed a few days ago that the planning permission has been agreed on the understanding that the diversion is put in place and that action on the ground should take place shortly.

Lost Path In from The Retreat to Aderwell in Frome- I have been informed that this will be determined in 2026

I have surveyed, with Daniel Gordon, various paths in Frome, FR 2/10, part of FR 14/2, Part of FR 20/18, FR 20/28, and FR 20/30. We have agreed that these paths are no longer required and will not be maintained. I will be writing to Frome Town Council to inform them of this that, unless they have a reason for opening them up.

Thanks to the work carried out by the working party, there are few serious issues in East Mendip. The Somerset Rights of Way Department Warden Daniel Gordon has estimated that the work done by the working party for virtually nothing would have cost Somerset about £49,000 pounds. To put this into context, the annual budget for Daniel is only £12,000. Walkers in Mendip have the best maintained paths in Somerset.

Although we have been informed that the 2031 cut off date for claiming historical paths will be scrapped, this has not happened yet. Brian Lucas and I are continuing to work, with the help of our volunteers, through the Somerset Parishes to gather evidence for submitting DMMO applications. For over 90% of the parishes in Somerset we have, identified the paths and determined the information we require, from the archives at Kew, to see if there is evidence of the paths ever being public. We continue to work through the parishes, share the information with them and submit DMMO applications where there is sufficient evidence.