

Minutes of the 2023 Valley Walkers AGM 5th November 2023

Sunday 5th November 2022 at 2:00 pm at Wootton Village Hall

Present: Bob Wallace (Chair), Roger McLeod (Vice Chair and Programme Secretary), Tom Collier (Publicity Officer), Fran Stedman (General Secretary), Mandy Wisson (Walks Coordinator) and Brian Roe (Treasurer), Roy Carter (Membership Secretary), Tony Sheward (Independent Examine) and 18 members (**see Attachment**)

Apologies: Derek Turner (Footpath Officer), Jan Wolfarth (Walks Coordinator), Bernard and Mary Morse, Mel and Denise Stringer, Peter and Sue Meadows, Roy Dunham, Ian Jarry, Elizabeth Lambert, Jennifer Wright.

1. Minutes of the 2022 AGM held on 6th November 2022

There were no matters arising. **The minutes were accepted by a majority vote.**

2. Chair's Report

Bob welcomed members to the AGM. He thanked Mandy and Celia for providing lunch for those who had been on the morning walk.

Bob's report is attached.

3. Treasurer's Report

Brian's report is appended to these minutes. The 2022/2023 Income and Expenditure Account and the Balance sheet are also appended.

The Accounts had been audited by Tony Sheward and been approved and signed off. Members voted to accept the 2022-23 IVW Financial Accounts. Proposed by Chris Burns and Seconded by Mandy Wisson

4. Officers Reports

The reports from Roy Carter (Membership), Roger McLeod (Social and Programme), Derek Turner (Footpath and read out by the Chair), and Tom Collier (Publicity) are attached to these minutes.

5. Election of Officers

All of the Committee had agreed to remain in their posts for the next year. Nomination forms had been received for each Committee post. As there had been no other nominations all the Committee members were approved by a majority vote.

6. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

Tony Sheward was proposed by Sue Tate and seconded by Barry Ingram and was accepted by a majority vote.

7. Adoption of IVW Constitution 2023

At the 2022 AGM the incoming Chair said that the new Committee would change their working practices to make them transparent and up to date. A revised Constitution would be brought to the 2023 AGM for approval and Group Reserves Policy and Committee meeting procedures and etiquette would be laid out. These documents had been circulated to members 28 days before this 2023 AGM. Minor modifications had been made following comments received. The final versions of the document had been sent to members with Agenda for the 2023 AGM. After discussion, the documents were agreed by members unanimously. Proposed by Brian Smith Seconded by Chris Burns

8. Bedfordshire Ramblers Area Matters

a) With no chair for 2022/23 the Chairs of Leighton Buzzard, North Beds and Ivel Valley had met

quarterly with Vanessa Swanson (Regional link Officer at Ramblers Headquarters)

b) Kevin Barrett had continued at Area Treasurer so money continued to flow through to the Groups. However, it was noted that Kevin has resigned from that post as of November 2023 as he has relocated away from Bedfordshire.

c) A Festival of Autumn Walks had been organised by the LB Group and supported by the other Groups.

9. Any Other Business

- a) Barry raised a point about Signage for the North Beds Heritage Trail. He said that signage was deficient, and more discs were needed. He reported that a few years ago it was agreed at Area level that IVW would be responsible for replacement of signs. The Route had been devised by Gorgen Edwards – a long time active member of IVW. Bob agreed to take this to the January IVW Committee meeting to discuss further.
- b) Rachel Bryce asked if the 40m Greensand Ridge Challenge that takes place over two days during the Bedfordshire Walking Festival could be also split over four days as part of our 40th Birthday celebrations in 2024. Bob said that this would be considered by the Committee.
- c) Bob, as Chair, said that there a great need to plan succession for Committee members. Roger down would be standing as Programme Secretary at the 2024 AGM. Bob, at this time, would not commit to carrying on as Chair beyond the 2024 AGM. He also pointed out IVW had a great need for someone to run the IVW website – this need not necessary be a Committee post.

10. Date of IVW 2024 AGM

Sunday November 3rd at 2.00pm at a venue to be advised.

APPENDICES

1. ATTENDEES at the 2023 AGM

See attachment

2. REPORTS

IVW Chair's Report – 2023 AGM

It has been a pleasure to be the Chair of Ivel Valley Walkers over the last year. What has been most pleasing is to have worked with such wonderful people who have been on the Committee. Teamwork has been the key with everyone contributing.

Life has been difficult at times, particularly with the introduction of the Ramblers new Walk Manager and many problems remain. Roger, with Ligia's help, somehow managed to get most of our walks onto the Ramblers system but full details are still not there in some cases. However, with the excellent 'Printed Programs' that Roger and Mark have produced and with Roy's invaluable fortnightly bulletins (where would we be without them) members have been kept up to date with all the group's activities.

And what activities have we had. Excellent holidays in Melrose and Matlock, trips to Kent, Richmond Park and Sussex and brilliant Social events - as well as our full walking programme on most days of the week.

None of this would have been possible without the contribution of our Walk and Events leaders. I believe the strength of the club is due to the outstanding contribution of our members. To you I say a big thank you.

The introduction of Facebook has helped improve communications within the Group – thank you Tom. We also had a first by lobbying CBC councillors on improving footpaths – thank you Derek for organising this.

On the Governance side, the Committee said that we would change our working practices to make them transparent and up to date. Minutes of Committee meetings are circulated to all members and feedback that I have heard is that this is appreciated. A revised Constitution is being presented at this meeting today for your approval. Committee meetings are open to all members to attend. This has proved useful when non committee members have attended as this gives extra opinions. Finance policies have been laid out and I would like to thank Brian for doing this and looking after the Group's finances in a professional way.

Thanks also to Fran for trying to keep me under control and to Jan and Mandy for their contributions.

And so, to next year - Ivel Valley Walkers 40th year.

As the year progresses there will be several special Anniversary events. A commemorative badge has already been designed and will be available to all members. Watch this space.

In 2024 there will be three club holidays in Lymington, Okehampton and Swanage, several social events, and many walks. A typical year for the Ivel Valley Walkers!

Finally, I would like to thank you all for having me as your Chair this year. If re-elected I look forward to serving you for another year.

I will say no more as I do want to steal the thunder of the other reports that will follow.

Bob

Ivel Valley Walkers Finance Report for 2023 AGM

This is my first year of presenting the accounts and I have tried to present them in a similar manner to last year. If anyone has any ideas as to how the presentation could be improved, please let

me know.

Please note that when I am referring to last year, this year, or next year, I am referring to the financial year. This financial year, for which I am presenting the accounts, is from 1st. October 2022 to 30th. September 2023.

Administration Account

The first sheet shows the income and expenditure for this year. Any money owed from last year (eg Q4 payment from area) is not shown as income for this year.

We started the year with £902 in the Admin account, which was a bit on the high side, considering our level of expenditure last year. We didn't submit a budget last year (for this year), but we devised an internal budget which would reduce the account to a more reasonable level. This budget included two printed programmes, the spring programme, and the summer programme. A third programme could have depleted the reserves too much. However, we managed to obtain £200 income from advertising to help cover the costs of the autumn programme.

The deficit for this year was £616.

We have submitted a budget for next year which allows for the production of three printed programmes. The budget has not yet been approved, but we are anticipating that it will be.

Social Account

Payments and expenses from last year, for this year's events, are included in the accounts. Similarly payments made this year for next year's events, and any expenses already incurred, will be carried forward to next year's accounts.

The rationale of the Social account is that all activities should be self-funded and aim to break even. It is necessary to have some reserves to cover events which fail to break even, and to prevent cash flow problems. If the reserves are too high, some events may be subsidised.

I have listed all the activities for this year. You can see which activities made a surplus and which ones were in deficit. The Christmas Lunch was intentionally subsidised, as was the Yomp, Chomp & Roll-Up.

It was agreed that members who had signed up for the original Lake District Trip to Ambleside, and had been unable to go on either of the rescheduled trips, should be given a refund. 11 refunds were given at a cost of £165.

The deficit on the Social Events Fund for this year was £419.

During the year, we received a kind donation of £500 from one of our members. This has been placed into a designated fund, referred to as the Special Events / Hardship Fund.

Balance Sheet

The left side of the sheet shows the value of our assets. These include the money we have at the bank plus debtors. Debtors can include money owed to us and expenses paid in advance, including payments which have been amortised, ie. spread over several years.

The right side of the sheet shows the value of the funds, not the same thing as the corresponding account balance. The Social Account now contains money related to two separate funds. The accumulated fund is just the sum of all the funds.

The current value of the funds should be equal to the value brought forward from last year plus the surplus or deficit for this year. If we add in the creditors, payments made in advance by members for next year, this should balance with the assets.

The fund values at the end of the year were:

- Administration Fund £679
- Social Events Fund £778
- Special Events / Hardship Fund £485

Independent Examination

The accounts as presented today have been independently examined by Tony Sheward.
Brian Roe Treasurer

IVW Membership Secretary Report

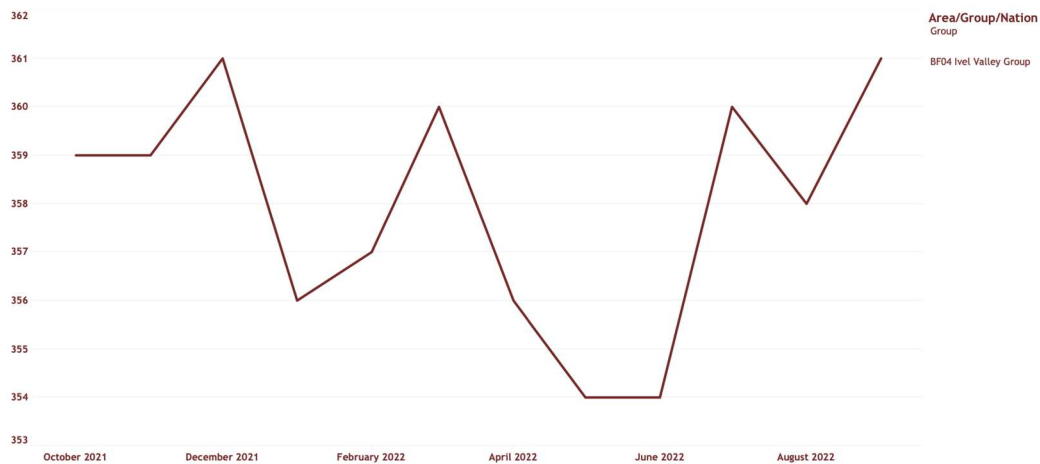
Roy Carter, 20th October 2023

IVW member changes over the past 24 months

Member Changes in the last 12 months - Members

Graph Choice
Members

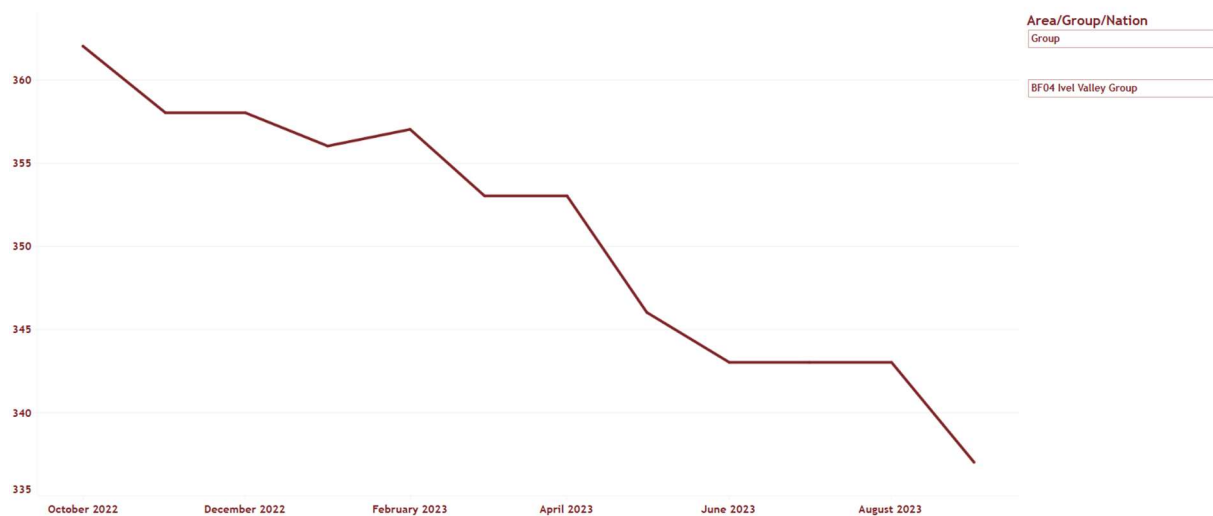
Figure from December 2021 to February 2022 may be high or lower than we would normally expect, this is due to The Ramblers changing supporter databases in this period which meant some membership function took a few months to resume normal operations



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Both the graphs above chart the changes in IVW membership over a two-year period from

October 2021 to September 2023. The top graph year is 2022, the bottom graph year is 2023. The top graph shows large up and down falls but the actual numbers involved are small – whereas the bottom graph shows a significant reduction in numbers across the whole year.

The net difference across last year (Oct 21 – Sept 22) was a gain of two members and the membership was pretty steady but that cannot be said this year (Oct 22 – Sept 23) where the net difference is a loss of twenty-four members and a cause for concern.

By delving into the Ramblers database, I find that, although 26 members joined IVW this year they were cancelled out by 50 members leaving the Group. There are several reasons:

- 18 members transferring to other Ramblers Groups – the majority earlier this year.
- 32 members either resigning or letting their membership lapse – the majority let it lapse.
- The appeal to walk or find a walk with IVW – no website, less walk information and variety.

There was an illustration of membership in the report last year showing a snapshot of info to support stable membership for September 2022, (see the Table below). I have reproduced the illustration to show the change this year as a comparison snapshot for September 2023.

Compare.

Summary Dashboard for IVW	September 2022	September 2023
Active & Payment Pending Members	361	337
Active Members	354	326
Payment Pending Members	7	1
Net Growth	3	-6
New Members	7	2
Rejoiners	1	2
Transfers In	1	0
Leavers	-6	-9
Transfers Out	0	-1

However, we are supported well with 30 Affiliate members who are welcome to lead walks for IVW and join us in our events and holidays throughout the year.

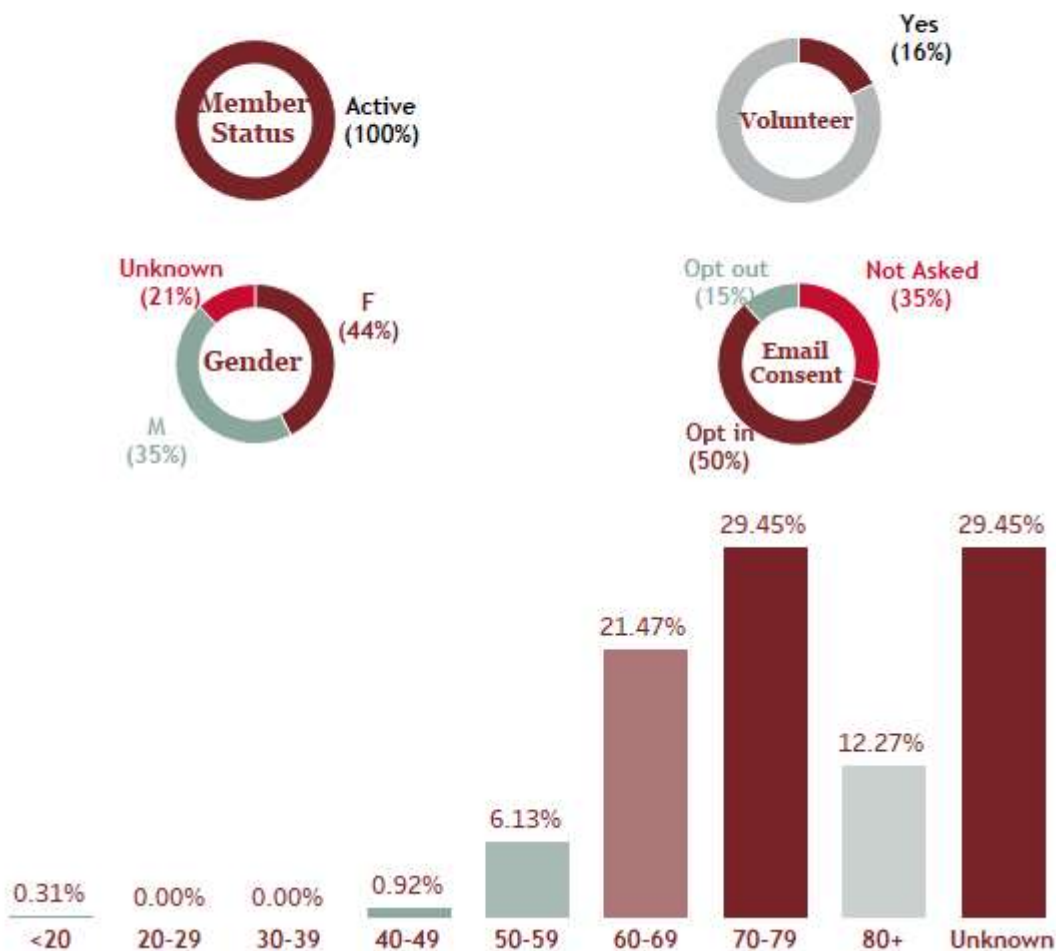
Another detail that can be extracted from the Ramblers database is statistics detailing the makeup of the IVW membership to help us promote membership and target expenditure.

This is also shown for September 2023 (see the Table below).

- The Age demographic of the membership
- The percentage of membership who are Volunteers
- Gender distribution

- Email consent

**Graphs showing Active members for month end September, FY
2023
326**



Giving consent to be contacted by email

The Ramblers Association and IVW continue to only use your personal data in accordance with the consents you have given. Your personal data is stored centrally in the Ramblers Association database, which is updated daily. Membership Secretaries do not keep lists of members or make changes to membership. Instead, for each mail sent out we download the relevant contact list and consents from the database, use it and then destroy all traces of it.

The majority of members have given their consent for us to contact them by email, saving us time and money. Thank you. However, from the statistics in the table above, we still have 15% who've opted out, which meant posting out 22 letters informing members of the AGM.

If you would like to amend your consent so you can be contacted by email, you can contact the Ramblers Association directly, or ask me / the Membership Secretary to assist you.

Ramblers Membership Fees

This year's review of the Membership fees have been approved by the Ramblers board of trustees and there will be a slight increase in the fees taking effect from 2nd October 2023 for new members or on the date of the next renewal for existing members

Individual Annual Membership is going up by £2.50 from £38.50 to £41.00 (£3.42 /month).

Joint Annual Membership is going up by £3.25 from £51.75 to £55.00 (£4.58 /month).

Individual Lifetime Membership is now £898.75 & Joint Lifetime Membership is £1112.50.

Concessionary rates are also available for Individual, Joint & Lifetime Memberships.

(eligibility: on state pension only or on means tested benefit or a student)

The Ramblers thank you for your ongoing support and say that Ramblers membership still represents good value for money and continues to provide great benefits.

Roy

IVW Programme Secretary's Report - 2023 AGM

The group has had a very successful programme this year, with over 200 walks, including IVW's contribution to the Bedfordshire Festival of Autumn Walks. There have been some novel walks among them, a morning and evening Summer Solstice walk, 12 Bridges of London walk, and other London walks.

We have also had two holidays in Melrose and Matlock Bath. Thanks to Roy C, Tom and Roy D for arranging these excellent holidays.

Thanks to the hard work of Mark, Michele and Ligia, we have produced excellent printed programmes, that do a great job for both our members and in providing a great publicity tool for publicising our group.

Our thanks to all our leaders who make everything possible, we are also, fortunate that we have recruited some new leaders to replace those retiring leaders which is essential.

On a more negative note, we have had to deal with the new Ramblers Walks Manager Programme, that has proved to be a nightmare, for both IVW and other groups, in its operation

Roger

IVW Social Secretary's Report - 2023 AGM

This year we have had a number of well attended Social events, arranged by a number of our members that have included:

- Go Ape
- 10 Pin Bowling evening
- Train trip to Isabella Plantation – Richmond Park
- Train trip to walk in the Kent countryside and visit Chartwell House
- Yomp Chomp and Roll Up
- Walk on Water, with a cream tea, resulting in a donation to Moggerhanger Hospice
- Coach Trip to the Devils Punch Bowl
- Barn Dance

Our thanks to all those making these events possible.

Roger

IVW Footpath Secretary's Report – 2023 AGM

- The well-used path along the eastern side of the River Ivel from Langford Mill to Jordan's Mill near Broom, part of the Ivel Valley Walk, is not registered as a right of way. A local resident asked if we could support making it one. We contacted the local Central Bedfordshire Councillors who are aware of the situation, support the path becoming a right of way and are keeping in touch with the footpath officers. I understand that the landowner is not against the proposal but is unable to agree to it for the time being.
- Across the river from this path and following clearance by the RIPPLE team, there is now a path on the western side of the Ivel passing around Broom South quarry. I am told that it will be formally dedicated as a Public Right of Way shortly.
- To the east of Langford, the paths around the wind farm and the link past Topplers Hill water tower towards Edworth should also be formally dedicated soon. These paths will then be added to future Ordnance Survey Maps.
- The new bridleway bridge over the railway north of Biggleswade to replace the Lindsells level crossing is nearing completion. Central Bedfordshire Council are planning to rationalise nearby Public Rights of Way to fit in with the new arrangements and agree with the routes on the ground that people use.
- Overall, local councils such as Central Bedfordshire Council continue to be starved of cash and rights of way work is low on the political agenda. There seems to be little money for making progress with claims for missing paths, some outstanding for 10 years or more, or for expensive jobs like bridge replacement. Some paths are closed until these are carried out.
- I was unable to attend consultation events about the East-West rail-link earlier in the year but it appears that the route across our area is now certain to pass north of Ravensden and Wilden. The new station where it crosses the East Coast main line is now likely to be at Tempsford (rather than St Neots South) beyond which the alignment would follow the new route of the A428 from the Black Cat roundabout into Cambridgeshire. This will save Roxton being tightly enclosed by busy roads but be convenient for the development of Tempsford airfield. When more detailed maps become available, we shall have to scrutinise them to see how public rights of way will be affected.
- The Committee discussed revitalising the Local Footpath Officer scheme where IVW members monitor paths in an agreed area on a regular basis. I have not had time to pursue this further recently but invite members to consider which parishes they can cover.

Derek

IVW Publicity Officer's Report – 2023 AGM

- The SE Walker Magazine is also available in audio.
- Tom had submitted walk articles to the SE Walk Magazine eg an account on the Melrose holiday.

- The IVW printed programme has regular articles from members and he thanked those who had submitted reports and encouraged others to send items into Roger on holidays or places of interest that they had visited.
- FaceBook – Tom thanked Sandra Axtell for her support in helping him with the administration of FaceBook. Currently, there are 119 members who use FB and he welcomes more posts from members.
- Semper Anticus ('The way forward') is Tom's mantra for 2024!

Attendees

Brian Smith	Bob Wallace
Sue Smith	Roger McLeod
Tony Sheward	Roy Carter
Chris Burns	Brian Roe
Trish Brickhill	Fran Stedman
Eric Cartwright	Tom Collier
Sue Tate	Mandy Wisson
Sandra Axtell	
John Nichol	
Martin Newman-Brown	
Judith Lombardi	
Celia Wallace	
Rachel Bryce	
Dee Clarke	
Karin Spedding	
Barry Ingram	
Martin Whillis	
Pete Patmore	
Rosemary Beighton	