

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
GENERAL COUNCIL HELD AT LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
11th-13th APRIL 2003**

* denotes a member of Council (voter)

PRESIDENT

Andrew Bennett MP*

VICE-PRESIDENT

John Bunting*
Geoff Eastwood*
David Rubinstein*
David Sharp*
Paddy Tipping MP*
Richard Lloyd Jones*

CHAIRMAN

Cath MacKay*

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Brian Reader*

TREASURER

Denis Fuller*

HONORARY SOLICITOR

Jerry Pearlman*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Kate Ashbrook*
Peter Ayling*
Jo Bird*
Chris Bush*
Annette Cotter*
Alex Marshall*
Kevin Matthews*
Alison Mitchell*
Terry Pollard*
Mavis Rear*
Peter Skipp*

AGENDA COMMITTEE MEMBER

Tony Clarkson*
Elizabeth Lawie*
Ron Moore*

Allen Pestell*
Sylvia Popham*

AVON AREA

Mary Cross*
Geoff Mullett*
Audrey Lennox

BEDFORDSHIRE AREA

Bob Cato*

BERKSHIRE AREA

John Moules*
Stuart Shurlock*
Jane Kiely
Cliff Lambert
Mary Walker

BUCKS & W MIDDX AREA

John Elfes*
John Esslemont*
Michael Bailey
John Wainwright

CAMBS & PETERBO AREA

George Smith*
William Thompson*
Graham Thomas

CENTRAL, F & T AREA

Charles Nash*
Jim Young*

CORNWALL AREA

Christine James*
Hazel Perham*
Duncan Thurnell-Read

DERBYSHIRE AREA

Colin Barker*

Circular: 03/123

Andrew Emerson-Smith*
John Hayes

DEVON AREA

Eileen Linfoot*
Joan Long*
Jean Mills
Margaret Vatcher

DORSET AREA

David Riches*
Keith Seymour*

DYFED AREA

Geoffrey Williams*

E YORKS/DERWENT AREA

Ann Cumberland*
Dennis Parker*
Mike Addy
Ray Wallis

ESSEX AREA

John Dowding*
Hazel Jarrold*
Adrian Vincent-Jones*

GLAMORGAN AREA

Barbara Palmer*
Terry Squires*
Danny Lewis

GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA

Jill Byrne*
Tony Drake*
Robin Lawrence

GRAMPIAN AREA

Jane Catto*
Irene Cruickshanks*

GREATER GWENT AREA

John Ridley*

HAMPSHIRE AREA

Guy Clift*
Owen Plunkett*
John Thackray*
Brenda Parker

HEREFORDSHIRE AREA

Arthur Lee*
Phil Long*

HERTS & N MIDDX AREA

David Allard*
Justin Lumley*
Eunice King

HIGHLAND & ISLANDS AREA

Ken Davidson*
Brian Spence*

INNER LONDON AREA

John Archer*
Jane Rosoux*
Phil Marson

ISLE OF WIGHT AREA

Jacqui Hough*
Mike Jordan*
Tim Hough

KENT AREA

John Charles*
Stephen Roberts*

LAKE DISTRICT AREA

Jim Burns*
Harry Hawkins*
Tim Baynes
Norma Benathan
Pauline Benn
Stan Benson
Ray Bowman
John Brayfield
Betsy Breuer
Steven Breuer
Margaret Bridges
Ian Brodie
Barbara Crellin
Brian Dillworth
Janet Dixon
Audrey Dunbar
Jim Dunbar
Josie Dunn
Alan Duval
Kath Duval
Margret Ecclestone
Jack Edwards
Eric Fleet
Gill Gale

Mary Garner
Margaret Gibson
Jean Gilligan
Bryan Harris
Jean Haydock
Joan Hibberd
David Hobbins
Kath Hodgson
Tony Iles
Michael Jackson
Brian Jones
Peter Jones
Sheila Jones
Jennifer Kingsley
Mavis Lancaster
Ruth Laverty
Mick Leverton
Pam Leverton
Jane Maxwell
Nigel Maxwell
Ken Mills
Alan Nash
Margaret Parkes
Ian Parks
Dorothy Phillips
Cicely Pickles
Muriel Rigby
Tony Rogers
Colin Rowley
Audrey Shaw
Alan Smith
Beryl Smith
Patricia Smith
Marylyn Taylor
Pam Thwaites
Susan Tomkins
Linda Waring
John Westhead

LEICS & RUTLAND AREA

Bill Brown*
Ellen Sandeman*

LINCOLNSHIRE AREA

Brett Collier*
George Grout*

LOTHIAN/BORDERS AREA

Joan Martindale*
Bridget Wilcox*
David Grosz

MANCHESTER AREA

Janet Cuff*
Edgar Ernstbrunner *
Gloria Gaffney

Keith Pennyfather
Terry Perkins

MERSEYSIDE AREA

Gloria Thayer*
Vi Williams*

MID LANCASHIRE AREA

David Kelly*
Walter McDermott*

N YORKS/S DURHAM AREA

Michael Collier*
Frances McNeil*

NORFOLK AREA

Alan Bowell*
Ian Mitchell*

NORTH EAST LANCS AREA

Susan Baxendale*
Alan Johnson*

NORTH WALES AREA

Dave Hollett*
Gerald Moss*

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AREA

Megan Cahill*
Gill Howe*

NORTHERN AREA

Ann Key*
Mary Moore*

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA

Rod Fillingham*
Alex Staniforth*
Jenny Fillingham
Marian Staniforth
Chris Thompson

NTH/MID CHESHIRE AREA

Keith Doughty*
Judith Halman*

OXFORDSHIRE AREA

Colin Edgar*

S & E CHESHIRE AREA

Alan Soper*

S YORKS/NE DERBY AREA

Terry Howard*
Allen Pestell*

SHROPSHIRE AREA

Phoebe Mills*
Alison Parker*

SOMERSET AREA

Mary Henry*
David Selvidge*

STAFFORDSHIRE AREA

David Cashmore*
Marjorie Cashmore*

STRATHCLYDE, D&G AREA

Jean Hight*
Barry Pottle*

SUFFOLK AREA

Ralph Brighton*
Molly Brown*

SURREY AREA

Graham Butler*
Heather Gumbrell*
Alan Lewis*
Margaret Hirst

SUSSEX AREA

Paulette Cowley*
Nigel Sloan*

WARWICKSHIRE AREA

Michael Bird*
John Hall*
Janet Satchwell
Inese Wood

WEST RIDING AREA

Gwen Goddard*
Keith Wadd*
Rodney Waddilove

WILTS & SWINDON AREA

Pat Crabb*
Angela Womersley*

WORCESTERSHIRE AREA

Trevor Antill*
Derek Starkey*

CAMPING & CARAVANNING CLUB

Jim Perry*
Sylvia Perry

COUNTRYWIDE HOLIDAYS ASSOCIATION

Margaret Whiteside*

HF HOLIDAYS

Joyce Hilton*

OPEN SPACES SOCIETY

Donald Lee*

RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION SERVICES

Stuart Alderman*

YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION

Barbara Smith*

GUEST

Irene Bunting
Mark Davies
Ann Holt
Arthur Howcroft
Malcolm Petyt
Barbara Regnier
Margaret Sharp
Irene Tipping

VISITOR

Peggy Crees
Carol Fuller
Kathryn Gregory
Malcolm MacKay
Naeem Siraj

STAFF

Nick Barrett
Paul Bell

Clare Benians
Rebecca Brewin
Gwen Campbell
Salli Carson
Kate Conto
Janet Davis
Des De Moor
Jayne Desmond
Jacquetta Fewster
James Fretwell
Des Garrahan
Sue Gittins
Murray Hatcher
David Joseph
Nick Milton
Ian McCall
Donna O'Brien
Beverley Penney
Emily Richmond
Adrian Ritchie
Deborah Roberts
Janice Samuel
Kathryn Shulver
Joanne Smith
Christopher Sparrow
Eugene Suggett
Lucy Vale
Nicky Warden
Mariusz Wilczynski
Julie Wildey
Ed Wilson
Sharon Woods

1 WELCOME

- 1.1 Harry Hawkins, Lake District Area chairman, welcomed delegates and visitors to Lancaster on behalf of the Area.
- 1.2 Harry spoke about the RA as a grassroots organisation with many active volunteers, and told delegates that Lake District Area was not only large and active, but had a reputation for being difficult. Perhaps, he suggested, this reputation was due to the Area being remote geographically, or perhaps it was the fallout from Sellafield which had made them that way! The people of the Lake District had accommodated many “invaders”, Scots, Irish, Vikings, and southerners. The variety of the landscape meant that, though there was much to enjoy, there was also a great deal in need of protection. Whilst it was vital to the RA that *Waymarking the Future* and the volunteer structure review were implemented, it was also crucial that the everyday work of the RA continued. There were many things to do, with windfarm developments, radio masts and the aftermath of the foot-and-mouth disease epidemic all causing concern in the Lake District. 140 applications to erect mobile phone masts had been submitted in the Lake District National Park alone. Developments in post-foot-and-mouth disease agriculture were also causing concern, as many farmers increased the scale of their farming activities and fences were erected as part of the process of hefting sheep. The Area was committed to monitoring and opposing developments where necessary, both within and outside the national park boundary.
- 1.3 Harry suggested that delegates attend the slide show, which would illustrate the diversity of the Area and show the beauty of the Forest of Bowland, close to the university site.
- 1.4 Harry ended by saying that General Council was part of the RA’s democratic process, but that it was also an opportunity to partake in “the craic” – gossip and talk with friends old and new. He wished delegates an enjoyable Council.
- 1.5 The chairman thanked Harry for his welcome.

2 APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Council noted with sadness the death of Joe Rosenberg, honorary life member.
- 2.2 Council noted apologies from Eddie Gibbs (RA Trust), Jack Ibbott (vice-president) and Margaret Ibbott, Alan Mattingly (vice-president), Kate Sayer (Sayer Vincent – RA auditors), Tom Sinclair (Long Distance Walkers Association) and Mary Weston.

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 3.1 There were no announcements.

4 APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

- 4.1 The following persons were appointed:

Tellers (Saturday):	Audrey Dunbar Jim Dunbar Alan Duval Kath Duval	(Sunday):	Audrey Dunbar Jim Dunbar Bryan Harris Michael Jackson Pam Leverton Colin Rowley Patricia Smith John Weshead
----------------------------	---	------------------	--

Scrutineers:

Ray Bowman
Ken Mills
Audrey Dunbar
Jim Dunbar

Timekeepers:

Norma Benathan
John Brayfield
Michael Jackson
Mavis Lancaster
John Westhead

Norma Benathan
Marylyn Taylor
John Westhead

5 NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 There was no other business.

6 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

- 6.1 Andrew Bennett MP began by thanking all delegates and staff for their support during his term as RA President. Andrew would cease to hold the office of President at this meeting, but would always try to help in his rôle as vice-president, and as a keen walker and RA supporter.
- 6.2 Andrew gave his thanks and the nation's thanks to the RA's volunteers, particularly walk leaders. These people promoted walking but also provided a psychiatric service, as they never refused to include the "misfits", and showed exceptional patience in their work.
- 6.3 Andrew spoke about the changes that had taken place within the RA during his term of office. There had been much innovation, with the walks-finder database being a major step forward. However, the database couldn't do everything Andrew wanted. It couldn't put on its own boots and make a lunch then go out for the walk, returning to report back that there were no dogs, brambles and locked churches to spoil the experience.
- 6.4 Picking out a few projects with which he'd been involved, Andrew went on to attempt to identify some lessons for the future. He spoke about his attitude as being one of "optimistic socialism", and said that his aim was to campaign for an improved society. However, though Andrew still considered himself a socialist, his optimism sometimes faltered. It seemed that it was a struggle to stand still, with walkers having to fight to keep their position. Andrew referred to the time Alan Mattingly first approached him as a young MP, asking if he would do some work on behalf of the RA. There were many issues of concern at that time, one being Nantlle Ridge in Snowdonia. Andrew was sent to see ministers in an attempt to have access to the ridge restored. It took 15 years for the Snowdonia National Park to re-establish rights lost despite 100 years of history of public access. This entire problem had occurred not because farmers were being awkward, but because the RA had failed to ensure that well-used paths were recorded as rights of way after the creation of the first definitive maps. Major routes had never been recorded despite the existence of a guidebook dating from 1900 showing them. This message must be remembered during the implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act; unless "lost" rights of way go onto maps now they'll be lost for ever.
- 6.5 Andrew also spoke about British Rail, and their decision to close foot-crossings over lines. Andrew had tried to further negotiations between the RA and British Rail at the time, with the aim of protecting rights-of-way rail crossings. This remained an issue for the RA today.
- 6.6 With regard to Ministry of Defence land, Andrew spoke about a campaign in the 1960s to reopen land taken in the 1940s as part of the war effort. This campaign failed, with the Nugent Committee producing a feeble report and no progress being made. Andrew had pressed for change, but very little had been achieved, with a small number of permissive paths being created, some unexploded bombs being cleared but very little land being reopened. Now, in 2003, the RA must work to reclaim this land; the problem remained and further land had recently been lost to the MOD in Northumberland.

- 6.7 Andrew spoke of the RA's rôle during the passage through Parliament of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, coordinating lobbying amongst amenity groups to bring forward a concerted message. The RA had then been one of the least well-resourced organisations, but had played a leading rôle. This coordinating rôle had been repeated when the Countryside and Rights of Way Act was making its way through Parliament in 2000.
- 6.8 Andrew voiced his concern at the continuing deterioration in the quality of the countryside, with much damage being done by modern farming methods. The RA must not only work to ensure that walkers can get into the countryside, but must also focus on the question of quality.
- 6.9 With reference to the long-running access campaign, Andrew spoke about the way in which the RA had kept the message alive through many years of campaigning, ensuring that lobbying work was supported by public acceptance of the value of countryside access. During the course of the next year the first areas of access land would become available to the public. This was a wonderful achievement, but while access to the countryside improved, walkers were losing rights in urban areas. There were many threats to the walking environment in towns and cities, with new provisions to close footpaths and passageways for crime-prevention reasons – the notion that it is not criminals who are at fault so much as the rights of way themselves was unfortunately widely believed. Andrew stated that it was accepted that far more crimes were committed on and via roads than footpaths, and that the importance of footpaths must be impressed upon those responsible for these decisions. More people regularly using paths make urban areas feel safe. If footpaths are open and well used they will be safe. Andrew urged all delegates not to overlook the right to walk in towns and cities when the freedom to roam is given.
- 6.10 Andrew spoke about his work during 1996 as part of a select committee which had considered the issue of footpath erosion. There was a dilemma here. Between 1935 and 1960 the RA had campaigned to establish the Pennine Way. The route had been a terrific challenge in those early days, with anyone attempting the walk needing map-reading and basic survival skills. The subsequent popularity of the route had caused its nature to change. Despite public money to restore some footpaths, the enjoyment of walking a challenging route was being lost. A similar situation existed on Wainwright's Coast-to-Coast path and Andrew asked if there were not other equally enjoyable routes that could be walked across the country to relieve this pressure on the original route. Andrew called for routes to be sustainable; managed in a way in which the surface dictated the level of use in order to prevent repeated restoration resulting in the original path being turned into a road.
- 6.11 Referring to another long-running RA campaign, Andrew said that bulls in fields crossed by a right of way were less of a problem than they had been, not as a result of RA campaigning, but because the use of artificial insemination had done the job!
- 6.12 Andrew ended by calling for the RA to work towards becoming a mass organisation enjoying the support of the 20 million people who listed walking as an activity. Andrew wanted the RA to grow from representing a small percentage of those who walk to become an organisation with a significantly increased membership and increased resources.
- 6.13 Andrew thanked the delegates and wished them a successful Council.
- 6.14 The chairman thanked Andrew and spoke of the way in which Andrew had shown how important MP support was to the organisation. He had demonstrated commitment - advising the RA, putting Parliamentary Questions on the association's behalf - and had achieved much through the years. It had been a good partnership, and the chairman expressed her pleasure at Andrew's continuing commitment to helping the RA in the years ahead.
- 6.15 The chairman thanked Andrew once again. The chairman's remarks were warmly applauded.

7 MINUTES OF GENERAL COUNCIL 2001

- 7.1 There were no corrections, and the chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of General Council 2002 as a true record. This was proposed by Hazel Jarrold (Essex Area) and seconded by David Kelly (Mid Lancashire Area).
- 7.2 Under matters arising, John Esslemont asked why an opportunity to correct typographical errors in the Memorandum and Articles of Association had been lost, given that General Council 2002 had allowed EC that freedom.

8 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

ANNUAL REPORT

- 8.1 The chairman moved the adoption of the annual report.
- 8.2 The chairman thanked members, sponsors, donors and Ramblers Holidays for their contributions, which had made the work of the association possible over the last year.
- 8.3 Council gave permission for Nick Barrett, the chief executive, to speak to the annual report.
- 8.4 The chief executive spoke of an exceptional year, with the Land Reform Act in Scotland protecting access rights and setting the standard for Europe - work which was a tribute to all involved. Currently, a deeper engagement with the implementation of the CROW Act was taking up a great deal of volunteer time, and a terrific job was being done by members in checking maps and commenting on them. The RA had enjoyed a significant campaign success in ensuring the regional commencement of Part 1 of the CROW Act. By summer 2004 the first region would be commenced – this was vital if implementation of the Act were to achieve unstoppable momentum.
- 8.5 The year had seen the RA respond effectively on matters relating to Part 2 of the CROW Act, with the association playing a part in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultation. Footpath campaign successes had been seen across Great Britain. While the van Hoogstraten path reopening gained much publicity for the RA, many less well known but equally significant victories took place, for example, at Mynydd Sylen in Wales, and on the White Cliffs of Dover path.
- 8.6 Nick spoke of the RA membership, which had increased by 5.4% during the year – the best figure for five years. RA central finances had been significantly strengthened, with a combination of fundraising, RA Trust support, Ramblers Holidays support and careful use of funds producing the desired results. The number of younger peoples' groups had also increased, with 35 now established.
- 8.7 Nick asked delegates to visit the campaigns room at the conference site, and announced the launch of the "Safe to Cross" campaign – a new campaign initiative. Another new venture was the walks-finder database, which delegates would also have the opportunity to learn about over the weekend.
- 8.8 Nick paid tribute to the hundreds of knowledgeable volunteers who had achieved so much over the year. Their knowledge and experience was enhanced by training and guidance notes produced by staff on issues such as countryside protection, access and footpath work. Recruitment and media work would be added to this list with the Recruitment, Media and Publicity conference in July.
- 8.9 The coming year would see a number of challenges for the RA. Countryside work would be focussed on national parks. Scotland's first national park had been established, and the RA's support for the South Downs, New Forest and Cairngorms National Parks would continue. Media work remained vital to carry RA campaign messages, but was also needed to broaden the RA's appeal. This would mean coverage for the RA in both the broadsheets and the popular press. Nick hoped that the RA would continue to enjoy an "appropriate" relationship with government – the RA in Scotland had set the standard by which NGO lobbying of Scottish Parliament would be judged.

- 8.10 Nick said that he had no sense that the organisation was other than respected and listened to at local and national level. The RA sat on national and local forums, had received public funding for projects from the Countryside Council for Wales and the Countryside Agency, and this showed that the RA's relationship with government struck a balance between cooperation and lobbying.
- 8.11 Nick continued to speak about the huge challenges facing the RA. An increase in membership, particularly an increase in the number of younger members, was needed, and there was still much work to be done on the implementation of CROW Parts 1 and 2, and, in particular, on the Discovering Lost Ways project. The problem of vehicles on green lanes continued, and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code was to be written. There also remained a number of internal challenges, including devolution and the volunteer structure review.
- 8.12 Reviewing the year, Nick spoke about it as being a good year for the RA, but warned of the extent of the work still to be done. Since joining the organisation, Nick had become aware of how constant and real the threats to the walking environment were, and how well organised the opposition to the RA was.
- 8.13 The chief executive ended by thanking all volunteers for their work during the year. He acknowledged that many of the RA's achievements would not be possible without this commitment. Generally, relationships between volunteers and staff were very good – Nick estimated that 99.9% were great, with the remaining 0.1% being kept on file! Nick admitted that the staff didn't get everything right, and thanked volunteers for their patience when this happened. The open days at central office had helped increase trust and understanding, and Nick expressed a hope that this would also happen as delegates met staff over the weekend.

Questions on the annual report

- 8.14 Janet Cuff (Manchester Area) drew the attention of delegates to the threat to the countryside from housing development on the edges of towns and asked that all monitor this in their Area.
- 8.15 Council agreed to adopt the annual report.

9 ACCOUNTS

- 9.1 The adoption of the accounts for the year to 30 September 2002 was proposed by the treasurer, Denis Fuller, and seconded by Ron Moore (Agenda Committee).
- 9.2 The treasurer then presented the accounts, pointing out that they were the final accounts of the unincorporated Ramblers' Association.
- 9.3 The treasurer spoke about his first year in office, and how he had become much more aware of the considerable number of hours put in especially by treasurers and auditors across the RA, and how far these activities were from members' reasons for joining – to walk, socialise and support the RA's campaigns. He acknowledged the additional burden placed on treasurers by the need to comply with company as well as charity law and expressed a desire to introduce training for those with financial responsibility at Area and Group level.
- 9.4 The treasurer paid tribute to the staff finance team, explaining that they were genuinely interested in the RA and that without them the RA would be poorer in every sense. He also spoke of the good relationship with the Unity Trust bank and how, though it was sometimes easier for Areas and Groups to bank at a high street bank, all should do what was best for the RA and that a move to unified banking should be made. This would help the RA to increase its income through interest, and income must be increased overall in order for the RA to fulfil its objectives. Unified banking would also make it easier for treasurers to comply with the increased reporting needs resulting from incorporation and increasing legal requirements, so would actually simplify the work done by volunteer treasurers.

- 9.5 The treasurer drew the attention of delegates to the year's income figures, explaining that, of the RA's £4.7million income, £0.5million had come from the RA Trust, and the RA was extremely grateful for this sum. He then stressed that the RA must not be complacent - £3.5million had been spent on activities in the last year, but only £3million had been raised by RA activities. In respect of its running costs, the RA really needed to be self-sufficient so that grants and legacies were the icing on the cake, not core funding.
- 9.6 The treasurer ended by saying that he was optimistic about the RA's financial outlook for the present year.

Questions on the Annual Accounts

- 9.7 Ian Mitchell (Norfolk Area) asked for further information on the £0.5million figure shown as income from publications and book sales. The Director of Finance and Administration explained that most of this income was generated by the yearbook and magazine, primarily from advertising, with the remainder being made up of sales of RA publications and income through Area and Groups publications.
- 9.8 John Esslemont (Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area) asked if EC would instruct rather than persuade Areas and Groups to switch to unified banking. The treasurer explained that company law required that the trustees be able to account for all funds held "in hand" and that they must therefore do what they could to enable this. However, it was important that all elements of the RA work together, rather than there being an element of force.
- 9.9 Hazel Jarrold (Essex Area) stated that some were reluctant to move to Unity Trust bank as they banked locally for convenience. Chic Nash (Central Fife and Tayside Area) asked what the financial benefits of unified banking were. The treasurer explained that there was a rising scale of interest rates depending on the total sum deposited across accounts. He offered to calculate the additional income this would represent should unified banking apply across the organisation, should delegates be interested. Annette Cotter (Executive Committee) told delegates that her own Area had seen an increase in income from interest of 80%. Chris Bush (Executive Committee) informed delegates that Unity Trust did not have high-street branches, but that Areas and Groups could nominate any bank and use this to pay money in and make withdrawals, so that there was no reason why banking should not remain easy and local. This meant that, rather than losing a local facility, volunteers would be gaining a central facility with increased rates of interest. David Allard (Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area) explained that his Group had been one of the first to join Unity Trust, and that access via the internet and post had meant fewer trips to the bank.
- 9.10 Dennis Parker (East Yorkshire and Derwent Area) asked why membership subscriptions could not be paid by monthly direct debit. The Director of Fundraising, Membership and IT explained that this was something that the RA would like to introduce, but that, when surveyed about this, only 2% of members had expressed an interest in moving to monthly direct debits, so it was not a priority.
- 9.11 Geoffrey Williams (Dyfed Area) asked why he was still waiting to receive his RA credit card from the Cooperative Bank. The Chief Executive apologised for teething problems with the new RA credit card.
- 9.12 Owen Plunkett (Hampshire Area) asked if funds held by Areas and Groups and not being used in pursuit of the RA's aims was being recovered to the centre. The treasurer explained that the Executive Committee were not being heavy-handed about this issue, but that it should be returned to the centre if this were the case.
- 9.13 Council agreed to adopt the accounts for the year to 30 September 2002.

10 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

10.1 Officers were elected, as follows:

Past Presidents

The following past presidents automatically become vice-presidents:

Andrew Bennett MP
Fay Godwin
Chris Hall
Mike Harding
Peter Melchett
Janet Street-Porter

Vice-presidents

Proposer

Kate Ashbrook

Seconded

Peter Ayling

John Bunting
Geoff Eastwood
John Foster
Jack Ibbott
Richard Lloyd Jones
Alan Mattingly
Malcolm Petyt
David Rubinstein
David Sharp
Paddy Tipping MP

Chairman

Brian Reader

Terry Squires

Kevin Matthews

Vice Chairman

Terry Squires

Terry Pollard

Brian Reader

Treasurer

Denis Fuller

Mavis Rear

Chris Bush

Hon Solicitor

Jerry Pearlman LLB

Annette Cotter

Jo Bird

11 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

11.1 It was proposed on behalf of the executive committee by Chris Bush, and seconded by Terry Pollard, that Sayer Vincent be re-appointed as the association's auditors, for the ensuing year. This was agreed.

12 ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12.1 Thirteen nominations for the executive committee were received. After a ballot, the incoming chairman announced the votes cast for each candidate and declared that the following nine persons had been duly elected:

Kate Ashbrook

Kevin Matthews

Peter Ayling
Chris Bush
Annette Cotter
Cath MacKay

Terry Pollard
Mavis Rear
Peter Skipp

- 12.2 The chairman thanked Jo Bird for her work on the Executive Committee in recent years, and especially for her work with the Advisory Panel on Walk Leading and Navigation.

13 ELECTION OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

- 13.1 Five nominations for the Agenda Committee were received so no election was necessary. The chairman declared that the following five persons would serve on the Committee:

John Dowding
Liz Lawie
Ron Moore

Allen Pestell
Sylvia Popham

MOTIONS

14 EMERGENCY MOTIONS

- 14.1 Council considered the addition to the agenda of one emergency motion.
- 14.2 It was proposed by Kate Ashbrook, on behalf of the Executive Committee, that an emergency motion on the diversion or stopping up of rights of way “for the purpose of preventing or reducing crime” be taken. Council voted overwhelmingly to debate the motion and to do so after motion 3. (The text of the motion is set out as motion 3A, item 15, below.)

15 OPEN SESSION MOTIONS

The incoming chairman, Brian Reader, assisted the outgoing chairman by chairing debate on some of the following motions.

[1.] **Mechanically propelled vehicular rights over existing footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways** (Northern Area and Merseyside & West Cheshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Northern Area by Terry Pollard and seconded on behalf of Merseyside & West Cheshire Area by Gloria Thayer:

This General Council notes with great concern the possibility that the cut-off date for the addition of historic routes to the definitive map will result in an increasing number of claims for mechanically propelled vehicular rights over existing footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways. Because of the damage which can be caused to such routes by modern vehicles, and so that users on foot, horseback, pedal cycle and horse carriage can find safety and quiet enjoyment on the public rights of way network, it calls upon the EC, Areas and Groups to campaign for legislation to be introduced so that:

- (i) Only sealed BOATs should remain available to mechanically propelled vehicles. A sealed BOAT would be defined as a BOAT that has been sealed or re-sealed wholly or partly at public expense within the last twenty years with the intention that mechanically propelled vehicles should use it.
- (ii) All unsealed BOATs currently shown on definitive maps should be reclassified as restricted byways.

- (iii) The duty to maintain restricted byways at public expense should be the minimum consistent with allowing walkers, horse-riders, cyclists and horse-drawn carriages to use the way for quiet enjoyment.

Council also notes that the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 has strengthened and extended the power which enables traffic authorities to make traffic regulation orders for the purposes of conserving natural beauty, of affording better opportunities for the public to enjoy the amenities of an area.

In view of the need to protect the countryside from further serious damage and loss of tranquillity caused by off road motorised vehicles, it calls upon Areas and Groups to lobby those authorities to make use of this power to prohibit the use of mechanically propelled vehicles on unsealed highways.

The following amendment was proposed by Gloria Thayer (Merseyside & West Cheshire Area) and seconded by Gerald Moss (North Wales Area):

After the final paragraph add:

“Council also notes with concern that increasing use of farm and forest land lying within National Parks and AONB boundaries by Trial Riders and 4WD enthusiasts and calls for the required legal action to be taken to curtail this environmentally damaging activity.

The amendment was lost.

Remission was proposed by Ken Davidson (Highland and Islands Area) and seconded by John Thackray (Hampshire Area).

Remission was lost.

The motion was carried *nem con*.

[2.] Development of air transport (Manchester Area and Warwickshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Warwickshire Area by Michael Bird, and seconded on behalf of Manchester Area by Janet Cuff:

This General Council is concerned at the adverse effects that major development of air transport in the UK would have on the British countryside. New or expanded airports and their associated infrastructure would damage substantial amounts of countryside in terms of visual, air and noise pollution, and would undermine efforts to develop sustainable rural tourism.

Council therefore instructs the Executive Committee to campaign against the government's proposals for airport development outlined in the Department for Transport's national consultation *The future development of air transport in the United Kingdom*. Council urges the government to manage future developments of air transport in the UK in a sustainable way and to reject the “predict and provide” approach.

The motion was carried.

[3.] Rights of way improvement plans (Hampshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hampshire Area by John Thackray, and seconded by Owen Plunkett:

This General Council welcomes the government's proposal that rights of way improvement plans shall be included into local transport plans from 2005 onwards. In order to “make them as beneficial as possible to the walking public” (see *Waymarking the Future – key direction 2d*) it urges RA Areas and Groups to familiarise themselves with the joint report by the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Countryside Agency *Rural*

Routes and Networks, and to use the excellent advice contained therein when contributing to the development of both rights of way improvement plans and local transport plans.

The motion was carried.

[3A.] Emergency motion on new provisions in sections 118B and 119B of the Highways Act 1980
(Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Kate Ashbrook, and seconded by Terry Squires (Glamorgan Area):

This General Council is deeply concerned about the new provisions, in sections 118B and 119B of the Highways Act 1980, whereby, in designated areas, orders can be made to stop up or divert public rights of way “for the purposes of preventing or reducing crime”, because we consider such provisions are unnecessary, rights of way can *prevent* crime and are rarely, if ever, responsible for crime.

We call on the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to ensure that, before local authorities make submissions to them for an area or areas to be designated for these purposes, user bodies are consulted.

We further call on the Secretary of State, when considering such submissions, to reject them unless it can be demonstrated beyond all doubt that all the rights of way in the area are the cause of a persistent crime problem which cannot be resolved by any alternative means, and that the area to be designated is the minimum necessary to achieve the purposes of the section.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

[4.] Unrecorded rights of way (Shropshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Shropshire Area by Alison Parker, and seconded by Phoebe Mills:

This General Council is alarmed by the lack of urgency on the part of the Countryside Agency in setting up the system of historical research necessary to avoid the loss of many unrecorded rights of way under the provisions of Section 53 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. It would be regrettable if the Act extending public rights to open country at the same time abolished existing historic public rights, and the RA should take immediate steps to ensure this does not happen.

The following amendment was proposed by Geoffrey Williams (Dyfed Area) and seconded by Geoff Mullett (Avon Area):

After “Countryside Agency” add “and the Countryside Council for Wales”

This amendment was accepted by the movers and by Council.

The amended motion was carried unanimously.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council is alarmed by the lack of urgency on the part of the Countryside Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales in setting up the system of historical research necessary to avoid the loss of many unrecorded rights of way under the provisions of Section 53 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. It would be regrettable if the Act extending public rights to open country at the same time abolished existing historic public rights, and the RA should take immediate steps to ensure this does not happen.

[5.] Defining line / width of rights of way (Lincolnshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Lincolnshire Area by George Grout, and seconded by Brett Collier:

This General Council calls upon highway authorities, when drafting policy documents, to state that tractor lines alone across arable fields are not adequate to define the line or width of any public right of way nor are they acceptable, without further compacting and firming, as reinstatement of the surface.

The following amendment was proposed by Trevor Antill (Worcestershire Area) and seconded by Derek Starkey (Worcestershire Area):

Delete from “nor are they...” to the end.

The amendment was carried.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council calls upon highway authorities, when drafting policy documents, to state that tractor lines alone across arable fields are not adequate to define the line or width of any public right of way.

[6.] National Trails – definitive right of way (Devon Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Devon Area by Joan Long, and seconded by David Riches (Dorset Area):

This General Council urges the Countryside Agency and all other relevant authorities to take measures which will ensure that all national trails follow a definitive right of way wherever possible, with creation orders / agreements where necessary.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Kate Ashbrook and seconded by Donald Lee (Open Spaces Society):

Insert “creation” between “orders /” and “agreements”.

The amendment was carried.

The following amendment was proposed by Tony Drake (Gloucestershire Area) and seconded by John Dowding (Essex Area):

Insert “the Countryside Council for Wales” after “Countryside Agency”.

The amendment was carried.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council urges the Countryside Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales and all other relevant authorities to take measures which will ensure that all national trails follow a definitive right of way wherever possible, with creation orders / creation agreements where necessary.

16 CLOSED SESSION MOTIONS

[7.] Amendment to Articles of Association to create Constituent Parts of the Association operating to an agreed Memorandum for Delegation of Authority (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Peter Skipp, and seconded by Terry Squires:

This General Council agrees that the RA's Articles of Association be amended as follows:

Clause 3. Delete existing wording and substitute:

- 3.1 *The Association shall be composed of Council Members, Individual Members, Affiliated Local Organisations and Affiliated National Organisations.*
- 3.2 *It shall function through General Council, Executive Committee, Constituent Parts, Areas, Groups and through such other elements of the Association as the Executive Committee may from time to time instruct to be established.*
- 3.3 *It shall not affiliate to any political party and shall be non-sectarian.*

Insert new Clause 4:

- 4.1 *Constituent Parts may be established by the Executive Committee, subject to the approval of General Council, and shall be responsible for carrying out the objects of the Ramblers' Association in their prescribed territories.*
- 4.2 *Each Constituent Part shall have as much authority and responsibility as in the opinion of the Executive Committee is consistent with the Association's duties and interests.*
- 4.3 *The terms and conditions for delegation of such authority shall be agreed between Executive Committee and each Constituent Part and shall be set down in the form of a Memorandum for Delegation of Authority.*
- 4.4 *Each Constituent Part shall adopt a constitution for the governance of its affairs which if it so desires shall be accompanied by standing orders for the conduct of its meetings and its affairs provided that such constitution and standing orders shall not come into force or have effect until and unless they have been ratified by the Executive Committee.*
- 4.5 *Each Constituent Part shall elect its own officers. The Chairman of each Constituent Part, if not already a member of the Executive Committee in their own right, shall automatically become a voting member of the Executive Committee.*
- 4.6 *Each Constituent Part shall not amend its constitution or standing orders unless such amendment has first been approved by the Executive Committee.*
- 4.7 *The Executive Committee may by a resolution passed by 75% of those present and voting at a meeting properly convened recommend to General Council that it should cancel recognition of a Constituent Part.*
- 4.8 *Not less than 75% of the delegates of General Council present and voting shall be required to accept the recommendation of Executive Committee. In the event of cancellation of the recognition of a Constituent Part all monies, property, documents and records of the Constituent Part shall accrue to and thereafter be the money and property of the Ramblers' Association (GB).*

Clause 21.1 (d) Delete existing wording and substitute:

The Chairman of each Constituent Part of the Association, if not already otherwise a member of the Committee

Clause 24. Delete entirely

Renumber existing clauses 4 to 23 inclusive as Clauses 5 to 24 inclusive

Standing Order C1

Delete "Welsh and Scottish Councils" and replace with "Constituent Parts"

Executive Committee asked Council's permission to put two amendments to this motion. Council agreed to take these amendments by the required minimum 95% majority.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Peter Skipp and seconded by Terry Squires:

First sentence: insert at end "with effect from 1st October 2003".

This amendment was carried.

The following amendment was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Peter Skipp and seconded by Terry Squires:

Proposed new clause 4.3

Delete the words "for delegation" in the first line and "for Delegation" in the third line.

The amendment was carried.

Ron Moore (Agenda Committee) proposed that the vote be put. This was seconded by Alan Pestell (South Yorkshire & North East Derbyshire Area). This was agreed.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council agrees that the RA's Articles of Association be amended as follows with effect from 1st October 2003:

Clause 3. Delete existing wording and substitute:

3.1 *The Association shall be composed of Council Members, Individual Members, Affiliated Local Organisations and Affiliated National Organisations.*

3.2 *It shall function through General Council, Executive Committee, Constituent Parts, Areas, Groups and through such other elements of the Association as the Executive Committee may from time to time instruct to be established.*

It shall not affiliate to any political party and shall be non-sectarian.

Insert new Clause 4:

4.1 *Constituent Parts may be established by the Executive Committee, subject to the approval of General Council, and shall be responsible for carrying out the objects of the Ramblers' Association in their prescribed territories.*

4.2 *Each Constituent Part shall have as much authority and responsibility as in the opinion of the Executive Committee is consistent with the Association's duties and interests.*

4.3 *The terms and conditions of such authority shall be agreed between Executive Committee and each Constituent Part and shall be set down in the form of a Memorandum of Authority.*

4.4 *Each Constituent Part shall adopt a constitution for the governance of its affairs which if it so desires shall be accompanied by standing orders for the conduct of its meetings and its affairs provided that such constitution and standing orders shall not come into force or have effect until and unless they have been ratified by the Executive Committee.*

4.5 *Each Constituent Part shall elect its own officers. The Chairman of each Constituent Part, if not already a member of the Executive Committee in their own right, shall automatically become a voting member of the Executive Committee.*

4.6 *Each Constituent Part shall not amend its constitution or standing orders unless such amendment has first been approved by the Executive Committee.*

4.7 *The Executive Committee may by a resolution passed by 75% of those present and voting at a meeting properly convened recommend to General Council that it should cancel recognition of a Constituent Part.*

4.8 *Not less than 75% of the delegates of General Council present and voting shall be required to accept the recommendation of Executive Committee. In the event of cancellation of the recognition of a Constituent Part all monies, property, documents and records of the Constituent Part shall accrue to and thereafter be the money and property of the Ramblers' Association (GB).*

Clause 21.1 (d) Delete existing wording and substitute:

The Chairman of each Constituent Part of the Association, if not already otherwise a member of the Committee

Clause 24. Delete entirely

Renumber existing clauses 4 to 23 inclusive as Clauses 5 to 24 inclusive

Standing Order C1

Delete "Welsh and Scottish Councils" and replace with "Constituent Parts"

[8.] To create the RA in Scotland and Wales as Constituent Parts of the Association (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Brian Reader and seconded by Alison Mitchell:

This General Council confirms a provisional decision by the Executive Committee that a Constituent Part of the Association for Wales will come into effect on 1st October 2003 and a Constituent Part of the Association for Scotland will come into effect on 1st October 2003.

The motion was carried *nem con*.

On a point of order, John Esslemont (Buckinghamshire and West Middlesex Area) expressed the view that, as the powers to create constituent parts agreed in motion 7 would not come into effect until 1st October, it would be necessary for EC to ratify their provisional decision on that date.

[9.] Amendment to Model Constitution for Areas (Executive Committee)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Mavis Rear and seconded by Brian Reader:

This General Council agrees that Section 8 (iv) of the Model Constitution for Areas (which currently reads *The Council may from time to time appoint and dismiss any necessary paid officers*) be altered to read: *The Council may from time to time appoint*

and dismiss any necessary paid officers, but it may do so only (a) with the prior written approval of the Executive Committee and (b) in accordance with any instructions issued by the Executive Committee.

That all references in the Model Constitution for Areas, and in the Model Constitution for Local Groups, to the RA's national constitution and standing orders (For example: Section 5 (i) (a); Section 18 (i) be replaced with reference to the RA's *Memorandum and Articles of Association and standing orders.*

The motion was carried *nem con*.

[10.] Insurance for practical footpath work (Gloucestershire Area & Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Gloucestershire Area by Tony Drake and seconded on behalf of Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway Area by Jean Highett:

This General Council believes that practical footpath work is an integral part of RA activities, and therefore members of the Association undertaking such work should be covered by personal accident insurance with no upper age limit where no cover is offered by the highway authority or other bodies. It instructs the Executive Committee to compare the costs of a centralised policy against Area arranged policies and to implement the most cost effective option within the next year.

The following amendment was proposed by Peter Ayling (Executive Committee and seconded by Annette Cotter (executive Committee):

In line 3 delete the words "with no upper age limit".

The amendment was carried.

Remission was proposed by Rod Fillingham (Nottinghamshire Area) and seconded by Keith Wadd (West Riding Area).

Remission was lost.

The following amendment was proposed by Jim Young (Central, Fife and Tayside) and seconded by Rod Fillingham (Nottinghamshire Area):

Add "and Group" after "Area" in line 5.

This amendment was accepted by the movers and by Council.

Jim Perry (Camping and Caravanning Club) proposed that the vote be put. This was seconded by Chris Bush (Executive Committee). This was carried.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This General Council believes that practical footpath work is an integral part of RA activities, and therefore members of the Association undertaking such work should be covered by personal accident insurance where no cover is offered by the highway authority or other bodies. It instructs the Executive Committee to compare the costs of a centralised policy against Area and Group arranged policies and to implement the most cost effective option within the next year.

[11.] Regional approach to countryside and development matters (Essex Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Essex Area by John Dowding, and seconded on behalf of Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area by Justin Lumley:

That General Council instructs the national Executive Committee to formulate a policy approach to countryside and development matters by which Areas can be grouped together to co-operate within the region.

The following amendment was proposed by Geoffrey Williams (Dyfed Area) and seconded by Owen Plunkett (Hampshire Area):

Delete "within the region".

This amendment was accepted by the movers.

Remission was proposed by Jerry Pearlman (Honorary Solicitor) and seconded by Chris Bush (Executive Committee). Remission was lost by 62 votes to 54.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

That General Council instructs the national Executive Committee to formulate a policy approach to countryside and development matters by which Areas can be grouped together to co-operate.

[12.] Involvement of children and young people (South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area by Terry Howard, and seconded by Allen Pestell:

This General Council calls upon the Executive Committee to explain to it what has been done and will be done to carry out the amended motion which was carried nem con at General Council 1999, "Involvement of children and young people", particularly as the Chief Executive has recognised the need to address this deficiency in our work.

The motion was carried by 49 votes to 30 with 38 abstentions.

[13.] Widening the appeal of the RA (Nottinghamshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Nottinghamshire Area by Rod Fillingham and seconded by Alex Staniforth:

This Council calls upon the RA to use all means at its disposal to widen the appeal of the Ramblers' to all sections of the walking population of the UK.

To identify and then formulate a structured approach to all the different needs of the various walking fraternity within the UK.

Once identified, what the different needs of the walking fraternity in the UK are, then to set up a structured framework of groups, so that there is a formalised progression from one section to the next as the walking, social needs of the individuals changed, so as to make the RA the preferred walking organisation in the UK.

The following amendment was proposed by Denis Fuller (Executive Committee) and seconded by Terry Pollard (Executive Committee):

In third paragraph, move the whole of line 4 "so as to make the RA the preferred walking organisation in the UK" to the end of paragraph 2 and delete rest of third paragraph.

The amendment was carried.

The following amendment was proposed by David Rubinstein (vice-president) and seconded by Terry Squires (Glamorgan Area):

Replace “fraternity” with “groups”.

The amendment was carried.

The amended motion was carried.

The amended motion reads:

This Council calls upon the RA to use all means at its disposal to widen the appeal of the Ramblers’ to all sections of the walking population of the UK.

To identify and then formulate a structured approach to all the different needs of the various walking groups within the UK so as to make the RA the preferred walking organisation in the UK.

[14.] Change of RA name (Berkshire Area)

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Berkshire Area by John Moules and seconded by Stuart Shurlock:

This General Council believes that the name Ramblers’ Association has served its members well for many years but if we are truly going to take a step forward in representing all walkers then it is time to consider a change of name.

Ron Moore (Agenda Committee) proposed that the vote be put. This was seconded by Don Lee (Open Spaces Society). This was agreed.

The motion was lost overwhelmingly.

17 INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

During the course of General Council and arising from an incident that arose during debate, Brian Reader, incoming RA Chairman made the following on the record statement:

“Yesterday I made a serious mistake by allowing the use in debate of a certain word which, even in the context in which it was used, caused gross offence to at least 3 people in this room. With hindsight, I should have intervened at the time. I want to apologise to Council for allowing the use of that word and, more particularly, I want to apologise to those who were offended (and there may well have been more than the 3 of whom I am already aware). I also want to make it clear to everyone that while I am Chairman of the RA I do not want to hear the use of racist terminology by anyone in any context whatsoever, please. If the RA is serious in wanting to widen its membership to all, we must all of us (myself included) be very careful not to use language which can cause such offence as was caused yesterday. Thank you”.

18 VENUES OF FUTURE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council noted that the 2004 meeting would be held at Exeter University on 16-18 April. Council approved the following venues for future meetings:

8-10 April 2005 – University of Surrey
21-23 April 2006 – Keele University
April 2007 – University of Nottingham

19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

20 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

- 20.1 The outgoing chairman thanked the host Area, Lake District, which had arranged volunteer tellers, scrutineers, timekeepers, registration staff, walk leaders, guides, the slide show by Ian Brodie, and had helped make the meeting a successful one.
- 20.2 Thanks were given to Geoff Eastwood and Brian Reader, for their assistance in chairing the meeting.
- 20.3 Special thanks were also given to staff, including the chief executive, those involved in organising the meeting and those who had given presentations during the course of the weekend.
- 20.4 Thanks were given to the university staff, especially; the conference coordinator, Hilary Barraclough; the porter, Graham; the technician, John; and the catering team.
- 20.5 Delegates were thanked for their participation in discussions, their ideas and for their contribution towards setting the goals for the coming year. Thanks were also extended to those partners left at home.
- 20.6 The chairman went on to say that, as this was her last Council meeting in the position of chairman, she would like to talk a little about her experiences over the last three years. She began by saying that there were some things about the job that she would not be so sorry to lose – the volume of post, for example, but the support and friendship she had received from others would be missed very much, as it had made the job possible. Now, however, she was ready to spend some time walking.
- 20.7 The chairman spoke about the difficult times facing the RA when she was first elected in Canterbury in 2000. Thanking those who had supported her during this time, she spoke about her continuing gratitude towards those who helped her in tasks she could not have done alone. It was essential that people worked in partnership and there were few people who could be truly effective on their own. The chairman thanked Executive Committee members for their willingness to be open to ideas and to bring new ideas forward – together they had built an effective team. Teamworking was evident in every corner of the organisation – the staff working with other staff members, volunteers and members working together, Area officers working with volunteers or with staff members – and throughout all these activities the RA remained in contact with the outside world, communicating its message. The RA needed others. It needed to listen to the views of others. If it didn't, it would stagnate.
- 20.8 The chairman thanked staff for their support during her term of office – she had been unable to thank everyone individually.
- 20.9 The chairman spoke about the need to be open to new ideas and views. Opinions about the RA's work often varied, and these could be put through debate and argument. However, once a way forward was agreed all must get together behind the policy and work towards a common goal. Without this common purpose others would be able to exploit differences. For example, *Waymarking the Future* belonged to the RA – it was not the chairman's document nor the chief executive's document, but the RA's document, and therefore belonged to everyone in the organisation. It was vital that the democratic nature of the RA was upheld; once a decision was made all should support it. The successes of consolidated action were clear to see in the progress of the access campaign and the re-opening of the van Hoogstraten path.
- 20.10 Speaking about the future, the chairman pointed to the implementation of *Waymarking the Future* and devolution as being key areas of work for the RA. The chairman thanked RA Scotland for their work on the access campaign there, and showed delegates a photograph taken at the final reading of the Land Reform Act and given to her in an RA Wales carrier bag! The chairman highlighted the volunteer structure review as essential work for the RA's future, and asked all delegates to engage with this work and to put ideas forward. In Wales there was still much work to be done on rights of way, with only 50% in acceptable condition. There were also concerns in Wales about CROW implementation. In Scotland, there was work to be done on the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

- 20.11 Looking back over her term of office, the chairman spoke about one of the first events she had attended in the rôle – celebrating Royal Assent of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 – and one of the last events – the Land Reform Act reaching its final stages in the Scottish Parliament. In between these two events the RA had seen the first national park created in Scotland, contributed towards the European Ramblers Association rally in Strasbourg, and played a part in many successful campaigns. RAGB was part of a twenty-six country-strong network of European organisations prepared to make a stand on the importance of walking – it could be likened to walkers groups coming together in the 1930s to form the RA and campaign for the interests of walkers in Britain.
- 20.12 The chairman then spoke of the RA as being like a wheel, with the Executive Committee at the hub, with staff, Areas, Groups and members radiating outwards, and there was two-way communication between the different “rings”.
- 20.13 In closing, the chairman stated that the RA would always be needed. There would always be van Hoogstratens to contend with, and the RA worked for everyone in improving walking opportunities. The association had a proud history and a long list of achievements – the chairman hoped that she had added something to this list in a small way, playing a part in the work of the RA, as all delegates present had done.
- 20.14 The chairman wished the incoming chairman and vice-chairman well, expressing a wish that they be given the support, encouragement and help given to her during her term of office.
- 20.15 The chairman’s remarks were acclaimed with a standing ovation.
- 20.16 Brian Reader, the incoming chairman, thanked Cath MacKay for her leadership and work during her term of office. He also congratulated her on her election to the Executive Committee for the coming year. A gift was presented to the out-going chairman as a token of appreciation.
- 20.17 This vote of thanks was warmly applauded.

THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS

W:\SR\GC 2003\03mins.doc