

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF  
GENERAL COUNCIL HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUGHBOROUGH,  
ON APRIL 4TH-6TH 1997**

**ATTENDANCE**

**PRESIDENT**

Janet Street-Porter\*

**VICE-PRESIDENTS**

Alan Howard\*  
Gerald McGuire\*  
David Sharp\*  
Wally Smith\*  
Paddy Tipping\*

**CHAIRMAN**

Kate Ashbrook\*

**VICE-CHAIRMAN**

David Grosz\*

**TREASURER**

Jack Ibbott\*

**HONORARY SOLICITOR**

Jerry Pearlman\*

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS**

Jo Bird\*  
Tony Drake\*  
Geoff Eastwood\*  
Peter Gould\*  
Peter Harwood\*  
Geoffrey Kirby\*  
Cath Mackay\*  
Pam Roberts\*  
Kate Walsham\*  
Des Whicher\*

**AGENDA COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS**

John Capes\*  
Tony Clarkson\*  
Sylvia Franks\*  
Sylvia Popham\*  
Brian Reader\*

**AVON AREA**

Helen Clover\*  
Eddie McGaul\*  
Bob Hicks

**BEDFORDSHIRE AREA**

Ian Gradwell\*  
Ian Lindsay\*

**BERKSHIRE AREA**

John Moules\*  
Bob Withers\*  
Jane Kiely  
Cliff Lambert  
Stuart Shurlock

**BUCKS & WEST  
MIDDLESEX AREA**

David Bradnack\*  
Barry Totterdell\*  
Clive Bostle  
Karen Murray

**CALEDONIAN (H&I) AREA**

Joyce Holms\*  
John Holms\*

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE AREA**

Bernard Hawes\*  
Les Spencer\*  
Tessa Capes  
David Shepherd

**CORNWALL AREA**

Andy Brockett\*  
Maureen Donovan\*  
Mark Hynard  
Hazel Perham

**DERBYSHIRE AREA**

Don Johnson\*  
John Laskey\*  
Arthur Osborne  
Joy Osborne  
John Pritchard-Jones  
Marianne Pritchard-Jones

**DEVON AREA**

Joan Long\*  
Jean Mills\*

**DORSET AREA**

Ron Bryant\*  
Colin Steers\*

**DYFED AREA**

Geoffrey Williams\*

**EAST YORKS & DERWENT  
AREA**

Mike Addy\*  
Peter Ayling\*  
Ann Cumberland  
Dennis Parker

**ESSEX AREA**

Maurice Austin\*  
John Barnard\*  
Michael Cullen\*  
Adrian Vincent-Jones

**GLAMORGAN AREA**

Alex Marshall\*  
Terry Squires\*  
John Sanders

**GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA**

Bill Irving\*  
Mavis Rear\*  
Alan Sagar  
Frank Wragg

**GRAMPIAN AREA**

Jane Catto\*  
Alison Mitchell\*  
Mike Beams  
Irene Cruickshanks  
David Fenlon  
Margaret Fenlon

**GREATER GWENT AREA**

Derrick Hynam\*  
John Ridley\*

**HAMPSHIRE AREA**

Ian Duffin\*  
Marjorie Kerr\*  
Brenda Parker\*  
Jim Kerr

Alan Marlow

**HEREFORD & WORCESTER  
AREA**

John Coleman\*  
Derek Starkey\*  
Jacqueline Hollis

**HERTS & N MIDDLESEX  
AREA**

Bert Richardson\*  
Andrew Taylor\*

**INNER LONDON AREA**

John Archer\*  
Martin Haggerty\*  
John Pestle\*

**ISLE OF WIGHT AREA**

Phyllis Griffiths\*  
Ken Mothersole\*

**KENT AREA**

Chris Barrow\*  
Kath Gill\*  
Peter Skipp\*

**LAKE DISTRICT AREA**

Peter Jones\*  
Audrey Shaw\*  
Jean Gilligan

**LEICESTERSHIRE &  
RUTLAND AREA**

Alan Loasby\*  
Mike Statham\*  
Tony Andrews  
Mick Arnold  
Mary Arnold  
Larry Ball  
Margaret Ball  
Alison Benson  
Robert Benson  
Anne Donegan  
Bob Doughty  
May Doughty  
Ken Fletcher  
Margaret Fletcher  
Ron Fox  
Ethel Fox  
Tom Gilfoyle  
Ann Lewis  
Susan Marlow  
Heather McDermid  
Eddie McWilliam  
Pat North  
David Nutt  
Pauline Posey  
Fiona Robinson  
Jackie Seager  
Pat Seager

Steve Westby  
Bryan Weston  
Rosemary Wilson

**LINCOLNSHIRE AREA**

Brett Collier\*  
Stuart Parker\*  
Nancy Coupland  
George Coupland  
Alan Nash  
Colin Smith  
Miriam Smith  
Ron White  
Barbara White

**LOTHIAN & BORDERS  
AREA**

Keith Gordon\*  
Arthur Homan-Elsy\*

**MANCHESTER AREA**

Terry Perkins\*  
Steve Slater\*

**MERSEYSIDE & W  
CHESHIRE AREA**

Gloria Thayer\*  
Vi Williams\*  
Brian Grey  
Barry Lello

**MID LANCASHIRE AREA**

David Kelly\*  
Carol Stenning\*  
Joyce Cattercall

**NORFOLK AREA**

John Harris\*  
Allan Jones\*

**NORTH AND MID CHESHIRE  
AREA**

Geoff Hill\*  
Ivor Williams\*  
Pat Brian  
William Fraser  
Gerry Haigh  
Norman Houghton

**NORTH EAST LANCS AREA**

Susan Baxendale\*  
Roger Haythornthwaite\*

**NORTH WALES AREA**

Margaret Fernley\*  
Mary Robinson\*  
Neville Fernley

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
AREA**

Maurice Tebbutt\*  
Mary Wildman\*

**NORTHERN AREA**

Tony Jones\*  
Terry Pollard\*  
Ann Key  
Maggie Ramsdale  
Bill Young

**N YORKS & S DURHAM  
AREA**

John Brock\*  
Alan Hutchinson\*

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA**

Alex Staniforth\*  
Chris Thompson\*  
Kevin Matthews  
Marian Staniforth

**OXFORDSHIRE AREA**

David Godfrey\*  
Ian Kilshaw\*

**POWYS AREA**

Peter Chance\*  
John Grey\*

**SHROPSHIRE AREA**

Ted Akerman\*  
Ron Moore\*

**SOMERSET AREA**

Colin Booth\*  
Brenda Prentice\*

**SOUTH & EAST CHESHIRE  
AREA**

Les Newton\*  
Justin McCarthy\*

**SOUTH YORKS & N E  
DERBYS AREA**

Christine Deakin\*  
Allen Pestel\*  
Roy Bullen  
Jack Burling  
Terry Howard  
Ken James

**STAFFORDSHIRE AREA**

Geoff Brevitt\*

Colin Brookes\*

**STRATHCLYDE, D & G  
AREA**

Elizabeth Lawie\*  
Jim Riddell\*

**SUFFOLK AREA**

John Bellamy\*  
Doug Hart\*

**SURREY AREA**

Graham Butler\*  
Virginia Kemp\*  
Valerie Kirby\*

**SUSSEX AREA**

Harry Comber\*  
Andrew Lyall\*

**WARWICKSHIRE AREA**

Michael Bird\*  
Reg Palmer\*  
Brian Keates  
Tony Middleton  
Steven Wallsgrove

**WEST RIDING AREA**

Keith Wadd\*  
Rodney Waddilove\*  
John Clark  
Josie McChrystal  
Frank Reynolds

**WILTSHIRE AREA**

Les Cornish\*  
Pat Crabb\*

**CAMPING & CARAVANNING  
CLUB**

Jim Perry\*  
Sylvia Perry

**COUNTRYWIDE HOLIDAYS  
ASSOCIATION**

Vincent Pedley\*

**HF HOLIDAYS**

Barry Samuels\*

**LONG DISTANCE WALKERS  
ASSOCIATION**

Brian Smith\*  
Les Maple

**OPEN SPACES SOCIETY**

Donald Lee\*

**RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION  
SERVICES**

Eddie Gibbs\*  
Kathryn Gregory

**YOUTH HOSTELS  
ASSOCIATIONS**

Keith Pennyfather\*

**GUESTS**

Cllr Ken Brailsford  
Jean Brailsford  
Robert Chaney  
Eileen Daley  
John Fenton-Jones  
John Foster  
Elsie Gaskell  
Alan Gaskell  
Les Gooding  
Eileen Gooding  
David Hunt  
Margaret Ibbott  
Sir Richard Lloyd Jones  
Audrey Lennox  
Richard Wakeford

**STAFF**

Katey Avis  
David Beskine  
Monisha Bhaumik  
Annabelle Birchall  
Gwen Campbell  
Halley Cohen  
Jacquetta Fewster  
Sue Gittins  
Catharine Gunningham  
Carol Harding  
Alan Mattingly  
Donna O'Brien  
Martin Ogilvie  
Beverley Penney  
Adrian Ritchie  
Janice Samuel  
Eugene Suggett  
Frank Syrratt  
John Trevelyan

**\*Indicates a member of General  
Council**

## 1. WELCOME

- 1.1 Larry Ball, President of Leicestershire and Rutland Area, welcomed delegates and visitors on behalf of the Area. He said that Leicestershire had first been host to a conference of Ramblers in 1928. Subsequent conferences had led to the founding of the Association. He wished Council every possible success.

## 2. APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Council noted apologies from Vice-Presidents Eddie Hibberd, David Rubinstein and Sylvia Sayer, and from Joan Hibberd, Ann Holt, Peggy McGuire, David Leyshon, Malcolm Petyt, Margaret Sharp and Mrs John Foster.

## 3. APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

- 3.1 The following persons were appointed:

**Tellers (Saturday):** Tony Andrews  
Anne Donegan

**(Sunday):** Anne Donegan  
Margaret Clark

Tom Gilfoyle  
Pat North

Jackie Seager  
Pat Seager

**Scrutineers:** Margaret Ball  
Ann Lewis

Pauline Posey  
Rosemary Wilson

**Timekeepers:** Tom Gilfoyle  
Fiona Robinson  
Bryan Weston

## 4. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

- 4.1 In her final address as president of the RA, Janet Street-Porter began by recalling the walks she enjoyed as a child over the hills and moors of North Wales. She and her family had wandered with complete freedom over these moors, and had never imagined that they were doing anything wrong or that anyone could possibly object. She realised, of course, that they had no legal right to be there and that, technically, they were trespassing.
- 4.2 Today, she continued to wander freely over the moors above her home in Nidderdale, North Yorkshire, but was constantly reminded by signs put up by the landowner, Yorkshire Water, that she had no right of passage over these moors. She had ignored these signs and had spent many happy hours on the hillsides above Scar House and Angram reservoirs, totally alone and harming no-one.
- 4.3 Over the Easter holidays, she had been accompanied by a retired Yorkshire Water Board executive on a ten-mile walk from near Hebden to Meugher, a totally remote hill, and down the valley to the little settlement of Stean, most of which was over bog and heather, following streams. They saw skylarks, hawks and no other person. She said the walk would not have been possible had they kept to the footpaths. Walking was therapeutic and was much better than any relaxation class or new age therapy, and what's more, it was free.

- 4.4 She expressed concern that walkers were being made to feel anxious about wandering harmlessly over an open moor and were fearful of being thrown off a remote heath or bog simply because they had strayed from a public right of way. Referring to Nidderdale, she said Yorkshire Water were insulting walkers' intelligence with glamorous notices of the self-evident fact that sheep, gulls and geese may be seen around Scar House reservoir and then tried to make walkers feel guilty with notices saying that there was no right of way over the moor. Yorkshire Water should spend more time worrying about how to get water to its customers, and less time trying to stop walkers wandering over its moorland.
- 4.5 The sooner the law was changed to allow people to wander freely over moors, mountains and other wild, open country, the better. Britain's walkers were looking to the next government to introduce an Access to the Countryside Bill in the first session of parliament after the forthcoming general election. It would be a very popular measure; but the RA must first address some of the more ridiculous arguments laid against its legislation.
- 4.6 Agriculture Minister, Mr Hogg, had criticised his political opponents for being, as he put it, "committed to introducing a general right to roam over farmland". Mr Hogg had claimed that this was a policy "certain to aggravate crime in the countryside" That was an insult to walkers, and a sign that he had not bothered to study the RA's proposals in more detail. Freedom to roam already existed over certain parts of Britain - for example, over the Lakeland Fells, which were mostly common land with freedom to roam - and in several other European countries, such as Norway and Sweden. Yet where was the evidence that rural crime was higher in these places where freedom to roam already existed? Mr Hogg failed to cite any such evidence, and the RA was certainly aware of none.
- 4.7 Indeed, there was some evidence that rural crime can be reduced where people have a right to walk in the countryside. In 1994, the government's own agency, the Countryside Commission, published a booklet on rights of way, with the backing of farmers' and landowners' organisations, in which it said: "...thieves can be deterred where paths are well-used."
- 4.8 The president said that if Mr Hogg was really concerned about rural crime, he would have condemned flouting of the law by farmers who year after year illegally ploughed up public rights of way and blocked them with growing crops. This was still one of the most widespread crimes in the countryside.
- 4.9 She referred to recent remarks in The Stroud News and Journal attributed to Princess Anne, which unfairly criticised walkers:
- Bridleways have existed for hundreds of years for horse-drawn traffic. That is not true any more. There is now mechanical opposition and walkers. .... People should realise farming is not a hobby. Farmers are not wardens who manage a whole load of paths for the benefit of off-road vehicles, scramblers and walkers."
- 4.10 She said it was a basic error of law to imply that walkers have fewer rights on bridleways than horseriders. The truth was, of course, that bridleways were open equally to both horseriders and walkers and have been so for hundreds of years. Furthermore, the RA and the British Horse Society had worked closely together over the years in defence of bridleways.
- 4.11 Today, both the RA and BHS were concerned to see the achievement of the government's target of putting all rights of way in good order by the year 2000. Sadly, the chances of achieving that target were becoming ever more remote in many parts of

England and Wales. Local authorities' progress in clearing path obstructions was just not fast enough. Lack of funds was often cited as a reason for this. Sometimes that was just an excuse for inaction. But there was no doubt that many local authorities do face genuine difficulties in meeting the cost of putting their rights of way in good order by the year 2000. It was therefore time for those in authority to acknowledge the seriousness of this problem, and to take steps to deal with it. One way would be to make funds available from the national lottery for putting all rights of way in decent condition. This step might call for some amendment to the rules which govern lottery grants. It would certainly call for a change in priorities on the part of those bodies who administer the funds - notably, the Sports Council, the Millennium Commission and the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

- 4.12 Our network of footpaths was as precious as the Royal Opera House or a ferris wheel and there were many good reasons for making lottery funding available for putting the 140,000-mile rights of way network in good order. Firstly, it would be a very popular measure, because walking in the countryside is enjoyed by millions of people of all ages and incomes. In fact, walking is by far the most popular of all sports and recreations. It was far more popular than opera. Secondly, it would encourage more people to go walking regularly, thus improving their health and reducing health services costs. Thirdly, the cost would be relatively modest, yet would produce a great deal of public benefit.
- 4.13 The Countryside Commission estimated that the cost of achieving the Year 2000 target for rights of way was around £150 million. If only one-third of that total (£50 million) came from lottery funds, it would provide a decisive boost to progress and could ensure that everyone would enjoy trouble-free walking on rights of way within four years. Already, nearly three billion pounds had been awarded to good causes from the national lottery. £50 million would represent only one and a half per cent of that total. Therefore, £50 million from the lottery funds - spread out over the 1,000 days that were left between now and the year 2000 - was surely not too much to ask to restore our glorious heritage of rights of way, so it could be passed on to future generations in good condition.
- 4.14 The president concluded by making a plea to the next Secretary of State for National Heritage to loosen the lottery's purse strings; allocate some of the lottery's largesse to the upkeep of footpaths and other public rights of way. The nation would be grateful - and healthier and happier as a result.
- 4.15 She assured Council that although her term of office was over, she would continue to lobby the RA's cause and argue most vociferously on TV and radio for the Access Bill to become law. She had enjoyed being president and it had been an honour.
- 4.16 The president's address was greeted with applause.

## **5. MINUTES OF NATIONAL COUNCIL 1996**

- 5.1 With the following correction:

Page 12, **motion 13.** MOTION OF URGENCY. After, 'On behalf of Manchester Area,' substitute 'Terry Perkins' for 'Terry Pollard'.

the Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of General Council 1996 as a correct record.

## **6. REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN ON RESOLUTIONS PASSED OR REMITTED AT NATIONAL COUNCIL 1996**

- 6.1 Council considered and noted a report from the Executive Committee on action taken on resolutions passed at National Council 1996:

**Motion 7: Cycle tracks (carried)**

- 6.2 David Sharp (Vice-President) commented that the guidance issued was useful as a brief for cases as they arose, but he felt that a policy was required, as the upgrading of paths for shared use was seldom in pedestrians' favour.
- 6.3 Brenda Parker (Hampshire Area) commented that councils may apply the urban law concerning cycle tracks to rural paths, not knowing about rights of way.
- 6.4 Geoffrey Williams (Dyfed Area) said that possible shared routes in South Wales were being negotiated. He expected significant numbers to be proposed.

**Motion 18: National Parks in England and Wales: Swinden quarry (carried)**

- 6.5 Terry Perkins (Manchester Area) read from a Council for National Parks report to illustrate the policy being applied.

**7. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS****Annual Report**

- 7.1 The chairman moved the adoption of the annual report. She thanked the voluntary officers for making 1996 a successful year. Members of the Executive Committee had, during the year, attended many AGMs and other meetings. She was overawed by the amount of work carried out on the ground by RA volunteers - producing walks programmes, getting footpaths opened up, attending public inquiries, from the Otterburn inquiry in which Northern Area was heavily involved to time-consuming but vital path-inquiries. She paid tribute to Alan Mattingly, who had served the RA for 23 years and led the staff in the three offices of the Association.
- 7.2 Terry Pollard (Northern Area) seconded the adoption of the annual report.
- 7.3 The director spoke to the report. He referred to the highlights of the year set out on page 5, and drew particular attention to the vote in the House of Commons which gave a First Reading to Paddy Tipping's Access to the Countryside Bill, drafted by the RA.
- 7.4 There had been many misrepresentations of the RA's aims for access legislation. Perhaps the most ridiculous was the recent claim by Dame Barbara Cartland that the legislation would enable people to walk into her garden and pick her flowers.
- 7.5 The Countryside Movement had opposed freedom to roam legislation. That organisation had recently come to an end.
- 7.6 It was gratifying, however, that many prospective parliamentary candidates, including several Conservatives, supported the RA's aims.
- 7.7 There were many other highlights to the year - the opening of the Thames Path, the launch of the RA's Free your Paths campaign, Family Rambling Day, etc.
- 7.8 Underlying everything was a steady growth in membership and support for the RA's work. Most members had shown great loyalty to the RA.
- 7.9 As a result, the RA's financial position was now such that the Executive Committee could contemplate some expansion in activity and staff numbers. Access legislation and rights-of-way work were key priorities.
- 7.10 The director thanked the chairman and Executive Committee for their support for staff during the year. He also thanked Ramblers Holidays for their continuing financial aid to the RA.

- 7.11 He particularly thanked the president, Janet Street-Porter, whose three-year term of office was coming to an end. She had gone to great trouble to attend RA functions; and she had been an enthusiastic advocate for the RA's aims. Working with Janet had been a lot of fun and she had done the RA proud.
- 7.12 In conclusion, the director said that the annual report showed that the RA had been "living in interesting times". He saw this as more of a blessing than a curse, and pointed out that the months ahead could become even more "interesting" for the RA. He was sure that everyone present would want the RA to take full advantage of any opportunities which events over the next few months might offer to the association.
- 7.13 Council greeted the director's speech with applause.
- 7.14 Brian Reader (Agenda Committee) reported a threat to the Thames Path from a proposal to make a cutting from the Thames to a gravel pit at Leyland in Surrey.
- 7.15 Ian Duffin (Hampshire Area) sought reassurance that guidance notes for countryside workers would be available without delay.
- 7.16 Alan Mattingly replied that the guidance notes would be issued soon.
- 7.17 John Barnard (Essex Area) asked for a report on progress with hedgerow legislation.
- 7.18 Alan Mattingly replied that the government had issued regulations and guidance. It was felt that these were inadequate. Some details were improved concerning rights of way but the rate of destruction of hedgerows would not be slowed.
- 7.19 Brian Reader (Agenda Committee) asked if the plans for growth in staff included regional staff in the light of the motion at council in 1994.
- 7.20 David Kelly (Mid Lancashire Area) referred to H3 in the report and asked if the studies into options for more office space in London suggested the desirability of regional staff.
- 7.21 Alan Mattingly replied that the 1994 resolution had been remitted to the EC which had not been minded to proceed. The reserves available were not huge and priority was being given to the training of and support for voluntary officers.
- 7.22 Council agreed to adopt the annual report for 1996.

## **Accounts**

- 7.23 The adoption of the annual accounts was proposed Jack Ibbott and seconded by Bob Withers (Berkshire Area).
- 7.24 Jack Ibbott referred delegates to his comments on the accounts which had been circulated. He pointed out that a new Statement of Financial Activities had been produced which reported income and expenditure from all sources, with expenditure analysed over three main headings, direct charitable expenditure, fund raising and management.
- 7.25 The total assets were now £947,697 after the revaluation of investments at market value as opposed to cost.
- 7.26 He commented that income had increased by 10%, much of the increase attributable to legacies. Fund raising income was down somewhat from the previous year. This was due to the special efforts made in 1995, jubilee year and the decision to concentrate on gaining covenants and direct debit payment of subscriptions, resulting in only one appeal in 1996.
- 7.27 He concluded that the position was sound, as membership accounted for 54% of income and the RA Trust contribution of £240,000 accounted for 10% of income.

- 7.28 Jack Ibbott thanked the finance staff, David Carter and Anthony Wyght and the staff who all contributed to the effective management of the Association's resources.
- 7.29 He said that he had very much enjoyed his ten years service as treasurer and was grateful for the support and friendship he had enjoyed.
- 7.30 He drew Council's attention to the schedules of central office overheads, specific costs and staff costs attached to the treasurer's notes. He asked Council if it agreed that they could be left out in future.
- 7.31 Council considered that they should remain included.
- 7.32 Peter Chance (Powys Area) referred to the schedule of specific costs and asked about the 55% increase in Legal, professional & consultants fees, particularly about the numbers of legal cases and the extent of successful outcomes.
- 7.33 John Trevelyan responded concerning the legal fees and explained that costs had been heavier in the year but that it was expected that some cases for which bills had been paid would yet result in refunds with costs awarded to the RA.
- 7.34 Mary Robinson (North Wales Area) sought clarification on the change in the movements into and out of the legacies equalisation account.
- 7.35 Jack Ibbott clarified the changed method for accounting for legacies. Instead of the first transfer of one fifth of the year's legacy income to the general fund being in the year following receipt it was now made in the year of receipt, thus reducing the balance on the legacies equalisation account at any one time but retaining the five year averaging of legacy income.
- 7.36 Brian Reader (Agenda Committee) asked, with reference to note 1(a) to the accounts, what aspects of the Charity Commission Statement of Recommended Practice, other than that given, remained to be complied with. He asked why the names of the directors of Ramblers' Enterprises Limited were not given; and made reference to the consolidation of area and group accounts and the need for simplicity.
- 7.37 Frank Syratt answered that the main Charity Commission requirements still to be complied with were the disclosure of Trustee transactions with the Association and the aggregate of Trustee expenses.
- 7.38 On the question of the consolidation of area and group accounts he agreed that a straight-forward method was preferred and that meetings of treasurers were arranged to go into the matter.
- 7.39 Eddie Gibbs (Ramblers' Association Services) asked if there could be an item under grants and contributions showing, separately, the grant from the RA Trust to the RA.
- 7.40 Jack Ibbott responded that the amount of the grant from the RA Trust was given in the notes to the accounts.
- 7.41 Council agreed to adopt the accounts for the year to 30 September 1996.
- 7.42 The chairman, on behalf of Council and the Executive Committee, thanked Jack Ibbott for his ten years as treasurer to the RA.

## **8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**Vice-Presidents**

**Proposed by:**

**Seconded by:**

**Past Presidents:**

Fay Godwin  
 Chris Hall  
 Mike Harding  
 Gerald McGuire  
 Peter Melchett  
 Janet Street-Porter

**and:**

John Foster	Cath MacKay (for EC)	Des Whicher
Eddie Hibberd		
Alan Howard		
Prue Leith		
David Rubinstein		
Lady Sayer		
David Sharp		
Wally Smith		
Paddy Tipping		
Mike Woodcock		

**Chairman**

Kate Ashbrook	Pam Roberts (for EC)	Geoff Williams
---------------	----------------------	----------------

**Vice Chairman**

David Grosz	Pam Roberts (for EC)	Geoff Williams
-------------	----------------------	----------------

**Treasurer**

David Hunt	Jack Ibbott (for EC)	Geoff Eastwood
------------	----------------------	----------------

**Hon Solicitor**

Jerry Pearlman LLB	Pam Roberts (for EC)	Geoff Williams
--------------------	----------------------	----------------

The chairman explained that the Executive Committee expected to nominate a new president in the next few weeks, and to submit their nomination for Council's approval by postal ballot.

**9. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- 9.1 Twelve nominations for the Executive Committee were received. After a ballot, the chairman announced the votes cast for each candidate and declared that the following nine persons had been duly elected:

Jo Bird	Pam Roberts
Tony Drake	Mary Robinson
Cath MacKay	Des Whicher
Terry Pollard	Geoffrey Williams
Brian Reader	

**10. ELECTION OF AGENDA COMMITTEE**

- 10.1 Six nominations for the Agenda Committee were received. After a ballot, the chairman announced the votes cast for each candidate and declared that the following five persons had been duly elected:

John Capes  
Tony Clarkson  
Sylvia Franks

Sylvia Popham  
Mavis Rear

## **11. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS**

- 11.1 The appoint of BDO Stoy Hayward was proposed by Geoffrey Kirby and seconded by Peter Harwood and agreed.

## **12. ADDRESS BY VICE-PRESIDENT, PADDY TIPPING MP**

- 12.1 The chairman introduced Paddy Tipping by thanking him for his enormous help with the access legislation, at press conferences and other meetings, in asking Parliamentary Questions and in producing the Forestry Atlas among other things. She expressed the RA's gratitude to him for his help with the Bodmin Moor Bill in particular.
- 12.2 Paddy Tipping said he was delighted to be attending General Council and spoke of the forthcoming general election which offered the prospect of a government sympathetic to access legislation. He noted that the Liberal Democrats had some MPs that supported access and some that did not, in contrast to the Conservatives who were opposed to access.
- 12.3 He warned that real lies were being told by those who opposed access. It was important to win the argument about access as a new government committed to providing improved access would bring legislation within our grasp.
- 12.4 The vilification of the RA's chairman by those who opposed access legislation had shown that there was a battle to be fought. He stressed the importance of not underestimating the opposition. It would be necessary have ready a new bill directly a new government came into office. A new government would have many conflicting priorities and the jostling for attention had already begun.
- 12.5 Stressing that there was a great deal to do, he urged rambles to lobby parliamentary candidates and after the election contact MPs. Hard work would be required to get access legislation into the Queen's speech. However politicians respond to pressure and now was the time to put the pressure on.
- 12.6 This election was a defining moment which posed the question; whose land was this? He believed this land was ours!
- 12.7 The address was met with applause.

## **MOTIONS**

### **OPEN SESSION MOTIONS**

#### **1. Countryside Commission**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Geoff Eastwood and seconded by Cath MacKay

While strongly supporting the work of the Countryside Commission, and particularly

supporting the commission's aim of having all rights of way in England put in good order by the year 2000, this General Council of the Ramblers' Association urges the commission to spend much more on rights of way, in order to ensure that the year 2000 target is met.

Council believes that the commission is under-funded. It urges ministers to allocate more money for the commission's work. If necessary, this should be achieved by spending less on the Arable Area Payments scheme, which is a waste of public funds.

However, if, in order to spend much more money on rights of way, it is necessary for the commission to spend less on other projects, it should spend less on, *inter alia*, community woodlands, the Greenways project, the Quiet Roads project, the Local Access Initiative, Millennium Greens, the Pennine Bridleway, the "marketing of distinctive farm and woodland products", and grant aid to the Country Landowners' Association for an Access Adviser.

Brenda Parker proposed and Ian Duffin seconded the following amendment:

Para 3, line, 3 delete from ".....community Woodlands" to "Pennine Bridleway...." inclusive.

The amendment was lost.

The motion was then carried overwhelmingly.

## 2. Water abstraction

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Manchester Area by Terry Perkins and seconded by Steve Slater:

Conference expresses its concern over the increasing, and current demands for abstraction, by water companies, from our river systems and especially our National Parks, and by so doing, seriously reducing the biological diversity and integrity of our finest landscapes.

In order to minimise the adverse effects of such abstractions and to ensure that present and future generations can continue to enjoy their rich heritage, this Council calls upon water companies to operate demand management strategies as part of a national and co-ordinated approach to water catchment and conservation.

Ian Duffin proposed and Brenda Parker seconded the following amendment on behalf of Hampshire Area:

Paragraph 1, Line 2, delete "...and especially our National Parks", and insert "and aquifers..."

Para 2, lines 2-3, delete "of national parks".

The amendment was carried.

David Kelly proposed and Carol Stebbing seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

The motion to remit was lost.

The amended motion was then carried by a significant majority.

## 3. Opencast mining

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Lothian and Borders Area by Arthur

Homan-Elsy and seconded by Keith Gordon:

This Council is concerned that new proposals for opencast mining will cover large tracts of the United Kingdom. It calls upon the Secretary of State for the Environment, and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, to develop planning policies which will consider not just individual applications, but also the overall effect of many adjoining applications covering a vast area.

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

#### **4. Planning applications - statutory consultation period**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of East Yorkshire and Derwent Area by Peter Ayling and seconded by Mike Addy:

This meeting of the General Council calls upon HM Government to introduce, or amend, legislation to:

- (i) introduce a statutory consultation period of not less than twenty (20) days, exclusive of weekends, public, Bank and council holidays, for all planning applications; and
- (ii) ensure that planning authorities cannot take planning applications to committee stage before the expiry of a statutory consultation period.

Alan Howard proposed and Donald Lee seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed by Council.

#### **5. Radio telephone communication masts**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire Area by Allen Pestel and seconded by Christine Deakin

This General Council regards the unplanned and unregulated proliferation of radio telephone communication masts with concern. It urges the government to require that all such masts must have the consent and the approval of the relevant planning authorities and that they are shared by other companies wherever possible.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

#### **6. Motorway service areas**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Avon Area by Peter Gould and seconded by Helen Clover:

This General Council deprecates the proliferation of motorway service areas (MSAs) in the countryside, and calls upon the Secretary of State for the Environment to issue revised planning policy guidelines establishing a presumption that no new motorway service areas will be permitted in the green belt, national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty or within twenty-five miles of an existing motorway service area.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

#### **7. Wind energy**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of North Wales Area by Mary Robinson and seconded on behalf of West Riding Area by Rodney Waddilove:

This 1997 General Council notes that opposition to wind turbine development already forms part of General Council and Welsh Council policy, following motions passed at both Councils in 1994.

"This National Council is concerned by the proliferation of wind farms and other smaller wind turbine generators in the uplands of Britain and other areas targeted for commercial exploitation, because of the considerable adverse impact such developments often have on the scenic, ecological, cultural and recreational assets of the countryside.

"It urges ministers to introduce a moratorium on subsidies under the Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation for wind turbines, pending a re-evaluation by government of their disadvantages and benefits. Council calls for public consultation to be a part of the re-evaluation."

Welsh Council 1994 amplified it in the following approved motion:

"This Welsh Council is concerned by the proliferation of wind turbines and wind power station applications in the Welsh Hills, which have a visual impact out of all proportion to their contribution to the energy crisis.

"In view of the resolution on wind power passed by National Council in York 1994, Council instructs the Welsh Council Executive Committee to promote a co-ordinated and concerted campaign in liaison with the National Executive Committee."

This General Council notes with considerable regret that no moratorium or consultation resulted and no campaign was developed. It therefore now instructs the Executive Committee to mount a concerted campaign against major wind turbine development.

This motion was carried by a large majority.

## **8. Projected expansion of households**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hereford and Worcester Area by Derek Starkey and seconded by Terry Perkins:

This General Council believes the projected expansion of households in England by 4.4 million between 1991 and 2016 AD represents a significant threat to the countryside.

It therefore endorses the submission made by the Executive Committee to the government on this matter, in which the government was urged to base their policy on the following principles in particular:

- (i) that nationally designated countryside in England (national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, etc) should be strictly protected against significant and additional urban development;
- (ii) that, elsewhere, any new housing development should not make tranquil countryside any more remote from people living in urban areas than it already is; and
- (iii) that priority should be given to urban regeneration and in particular to enhancing, extending and connecting open spaces and traffic free green corridors in towns and cities.

Council urges the government to adopt these principles.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

## **9. Concessionary access**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Mid Lancashire Area by David Kelly and

seconded by Tony Clarkson:

That this General Council of the Ramblers' Association, while believing that rights of way and other rights of public access to the countryside are far preferable to concessionary or permissive access, nevertheless believes that, where concessionary access (either linear or over a given area) is secured through the expenditure of public funds, then it should be a condition of any grant aid or other financial support, that the concessionary access is depicted on appropriate Ordnance Survey maps if the OS agrees to depict it, in England and Wales only.

Council therefore calls upon the Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant government departments and agencies who are involved in using public funds to secure concessionary access to act on the policy set out in the previous paragraph.

Council also urges Ramblers' Association Areas to press their local authorities and national park authorities to pursue a similar policy if and when they are using public funds to secure concessionary access.

Peter Harwood proposed and Geoff Williams seconded the following amendment of behalf of the Executive Committee:

Insert "normally" before "depicted" on the last line of the first paragraph, and add at the end of the first paragraph, "if the OS agrees to depict it".

The amendment was carried overwhelmingly.

This amended motion was then carried.

## **10. Access to Ministry of Defence land**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Surrey Area by Brian Reader and seconded on behalf of Hampshire Area by Ian Duffin:

This General Council of the Ramblers' Association calls upon the government:

- (i) to publish a handbook accurately listing all opportunities for public access for informal open-air recreation upon land owned by the Ministry of Defence, and
- (ii) to ensure that all such access is free of charge to both individuals and groups of ramblers.

This motion was carried unanimously.

## **11. Access to development land**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Inner London Area by John Pestle and seconded by Martin Haggerty:

This General Council welcomes the success of the policies of the local authorities in London which has ensured that riverside access has been provided when housing or industrial development has taken place.

We note, however, that much land still remains to be developed, which means that the land lies derelict and access is not available. We call, therefore, for a change in legislation and planning policy to require landowners to make access available prior to development, recognising, of course, that the development itself might require a temporary reduction in access.

Des Whicher proposed and Peter Gould seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed by Council.

## 12 Cairn Gorm: funicular railway proposal

On behalf of Northern Area, Terry Pollard moved and Tony Jones seconded that the motion set out below be considered as one of urgency.

This was agreed by Council.

On behalf of Northern Area, Terry Pollard proposed and Kate Walsham seconded the following motion:

This General Council of the Ramblers' Association deplores the fact that planning permission has now been granted for the construction of a funicular railway on Cairn Gorm.

Given the extensive concern about the environmental impact of this proposal which exists at national and international levels, and the existence of serious doubt about the long-term financial viability of the proposal, Council calls upon the Prime Minister to review whether any government financial aid at all should be used to enable the proposal to be carried out.

The motion was then carried.

## 13. Highway Authorities

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Shropshire Area by Ron Moore and seconded by Ted Akerman:

This General Council deplores the fact that many Highway Authorities are regularly failing in their duty to protect and assert the right of the public to the use and enjoyment of public rights of way by allowing some rights of way to remain obstructed for years after the obstruction is drawn to their attention. Department of the Environment circular 2/93 and Welsh Office circular 5/93 state in paragraph 28 that "the Secretaries of State look to local authorities to ensure that any obstructions they discover or have reported to them are removed without any undue delay" but do not specify what is considered to be "undue delay". This lack of precision makes it difficult for effective action to be taken against dilatory authorities. Moreover the present route for complaints via local authorities' complaints procedures and the Local Government Ombudsman is long-winded and largely ineffective. This General Council therefore instructs the Executive Committee to decide in their view what constitutes "undue delay" and then press that view on the government and seek more effective means for taking punitive action against authorities who fail in their duties.

Pam Roberts proposed and Peter Gould seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed by Council.

## 14. Highway Authorities

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Kent Area by Peter Skipp and seconded by Kath Gill:

This General Council notes with grave concern the severe funding restrictions imposed by central government on local authorities. Because of impending drastic cuts in resource allocations already announced by some local authorities to their rights of way departments, this General Council requests that Executive Committee take steps to:

- remind all highway authorities and planning authorities in Scotland of their

legal obligations with respect to their statutory duties in relation to rights of way;

- seek assurances from central government that highway authorities and planning authorities in Scotland will have adequate funds to carry out statutory obligations;
- remind landowners and occupiers of their legal obligations which can be carried out at no expense to the public.

This motion was carried unanimously.

## **15. Road design guidance**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Executive Committee by Kate Walsham and seconded by Jo Bird:

This General Council is concerned at the extent to which new road schemes and road improvement works fail adequately to take account of walkers' needs. General Council calls on the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales to examine existing road design guidance, in discussion with the Ramblers' Association, with a view to introducing much higher standards of provision for walkers in new road schemes and improvement works.

This motion carried unanimously.

## **16. Increasing the national definitive footpath network**

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area by Burt Richardson and seconded by Andrew Taylor:

This General Council believes that in addition to the present methods of increasing the mileage of the national definitive footpath network we should seek to set up the apparatus to buy land or land rights to create new paths. This would be done through Lottery funds, donations and bequests. We therefore instruct the Executive Committee to investigate the possibility of setting up such a body on their own or in partnership with other interested bodies, eg, the Woodland Trust or the National Trust.

As it was 12.30 pm, this motion was remitted to the Executive Committee.

## **17. Fencing on open land**

The following motion from Northern Area was not reached before 12.30 pm on Sunday and was remitted to the Executive Committee:

This General Council notes with concern the increasing amount of fencing that is being erected on open land throughout Britain.

It urges the government to introduce a law requiring that permission must be required for new fences on all open land in areas of high scenic value, including national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty in England and Wales.

Council calls upon the Executive Committee to campaign for such a law.

## **MOTIONS FOR CLOSED SESSIONS**

## 18. Long-term aims: "freedom to roam"

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Des Whicher and seconded by Peter Harwood:

Amend clause 3 of the RA's long-term aims to read as follows:

A legally-protected "freedom to roam" on foot. In England and Wales this would be over common land, mountain, moor, heath, down, cliff, foreshore and woodland, and alongside rivers, canals and lakes. In Scotland it would be over all land in the countryside subject to reasonable restraints. Throughout Britain, this freedom to roam would be accompanied by a duty of care by walkers so that the need to protect wildlife, domestic privacy, farming and other economic uses of the land was taken into account.

This motion was carried by a large majority.

## 19. Countryside work

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Oxfordshire Area by Jack Ibbott and seconded by Ian Kilshaw:

Having regard to the continuing threats to the countryside and since without an attractive countryside, rambling becomes just another form of outdoor physical exercise, this General Council calls upon the Executive Committee through Areas and Groups to give greater emphasis to the object in the constitution "to work for and assist in ... the preservation and enhancement for the benefit of the public of the beauty of the countryside;" and once again urges each Area and Group to appoint a countryside secretary and each Area a countryside subcommittee.

This motion was carried by an overwhelming majority.

## 20. Upgrading of footpaths

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Devon Area by Joan Long and seconded by Jean Mills:

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee to seek a change in legislation to stop the upgrading of footpaths to bridleways by horse riders on evidence of use since, in each case, the relevant date for the first showing of a footpath on the definitive map.

This motion was lost

## 21. Family Rambling Day

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Merseyside and West Cheshire Area by Gloria Thayer and seconded by Vi Williams:

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee, Areas and Groups to promote family rambling as a year round activity.

The promotion of membership of the Ramblers' Association must be directed towards encouraging young persons with their families to enjoy and participate in rambling from an early age.

Cath Mackay proposed and Peter Harwood seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed by 76 votes for and 61 against.

## 22. Public inquiry costs

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Norfolk Area by Allan Jones and seconded by John Harris:

This General Council instructs the Executive Committee that, if costs are awarded against the Ramblers' Association as a result of an Area or Group representing the association at a public inquiry, any such costs shall be met by the Executive Committee.

Eddie McGaul proposed and Helen Clover seconded the following amendment on behalf of Avon Area:

Line 4: after the words "...shall be" delete "met by the Executive Committee" and substitute, "reviewed by the Executive Committee and if approved met from central funds."

This amendment was carried.

Alan Howard proposed and Ron Moore seconded remission to the Executive Committee.

This was agreed by Council.

## 23. Conferences for RA volunteers

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Peter Gould and seconded by Geoffrey Kirby:

This General Council rescinds the 1993 Council resolution instructing the Executive Committee to hold a biennial Area secretaries' conference.

Instead, Council instructs the committee to organise at least one conference each year for one or more groups of RA volunteers from most or all Areas.

Elizabeth Lawie proposed and Sylvia Popham seconded the following amendment:

Paragraph 2, line 3: add after "Areas", "there being such a conference for Area Secretaries at least every third year."

The amendment was carried by 62 votes for and 52 against.

This amended motion then was carried.

## 24. Communications with Areas and Groups

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Essex Area by Mike Cullen and seconded by Maurice Austin:

This General Council believes that in order to let all members be more aware of what the RA does the Executive Committee should investigate and report to the General Council in 1998 ways of improving communications with Area and Group Officers on all matters of current policy and interest, including the possible preparation of a loose leaf policy handbook for Area Officers and Group Secretaries.

Ian Duffin proposed and John Capes seconded the following amendment:

Line 5: delete "Area officers and Group Secretaries" and substitute "Area and Group Officers".

The amendment was carried.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

## 25. Less-used paths

The following motion was proposed on behalf of the Executive Committee by Cath MacKay and seconded by Kate Walsham:

This General Council calls on Areas, as a fillip to the Free Your Paths campaign, to encourage every Group to organise throughout the year at least some walks on the less-used and poorer-maintained paths in the Group's and Area's territory.

This motion was carried overwhelmingly.

## 26. Membership subscription rates

The following motion was proposed on behalf of Gloucestershire Area by Mavis Rear and seconded by Bill Irving:

This Council calls upon Executive Committee to review the membership subscription proportion rates and if necessary to present proposals to General Council to alter the proportions, preferably in stages.

This motion was carried.

## 13. VENUES OF FUTURE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 13.1 Council noted that the 1998 meeting of General Council would be held at Aberdeen University on 3rd-5th April 1998. It was proposed by the chairman and seconded by the vice-chairman that the 1999 council meeting be held at the University of Nottingham, the 2000 meeting at Canterbury and the 2001 meeting at Bath. This was agreed.

## 14. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

- 14.1 In her closing remarks, the chairman expressed gratitude on behalf of Council and the Executive Committee to Geoff Eastwood, who, after 23 years on the Executive Committee, was not standing for re-election.
- 14.2 She thanked in particular the technicians, the university staff, Richard Wakeford (Chief Executive of the Countryside Commission) who had spoken after dinner on Saturday night, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Charnwood. She praised the contribution of all seven groups in the host area with special thanks to Susan Marlow who had contributed greatly to the Area's effort. She paid special tribute to Janice Samuel for organising Council and thanked the RA staff for all their hard work over the weekend.
- 14.3 The chairman noted that council had this year expressed strong feelings about a number of countryside issues. However, she reminded council that resources were limited and, as the motion addressed to the Countryside Commission suggested, it was necessary to decide which items should receive less expenditure in order for there to be more on countryside work. The EC would have to take these decisions but council should appreciate that the priorities were on access legislation and getting all the rights of way opened up. She drew council's attention to David Beskine's plans for members to write to their MPs, after the general election, to press for access legislation.
- 14.4 She reminded council of Free Your Paths Weekend, which was both an opportunity to celebrate and to highlight problems. It was important to continue to work towards the target of all paths being in good order by the year 2000. Members were urged to lobby councillors, demand that councils apply sufficient resources to rights of way and enjoy Free Your Paths Weekend.
- 14.5 She noted that the Country Landowners Association had appointed an access adviser. This was likely to lead to offers of permissive paths in return for agreeing to diversions to rights of way. Such deals undermined the historic path-network and its supporting legislation. It was

important to remember that landowners did not usually give something for nothing, so members should not become involved and should keep central office informed of any CLA-promoted activity in their areas.

- 14.6 She also reminded council that the RA represented the public. It was important not to accept permissive paths by 'permission of the estate'. If the public could not walk neither should we. Ramblers should not get permission just for themselves as such activities undermine access for all.
- 14.7 She said that council should tell all the RA volunteers how much they were appreciated. This year, which was likely to see a change of government, gave us a great opportunity and by acting together and fighting for what we believed in, much would be achieved.
- 14.8 The chairman's address was greeted with applause.
- 14.9 David Grosz (vice chairman) warmly thanked the chairman on behalf of council for the efficient and kindly way she had conducted the business.
- 14.10 Council registered its appreciation with acclaim.

**THIS ENDED THE BUSINESS**