

**Minutes of the 22nd Annual General Meeting
of the
Dales Way Association
held at 2:00pm on
Saturday 25th Oct 2014
in
The Yard, Ilkley, LS29 8DE.**

Before today's AGM a record 24 DWA members joined Chairman Colin Speakman for a delightful amble along the river Wharfe from Barden Towers to Bolton Abbey following the path of the Dales Way.

Introduction

Colin welcomed Dales Way Association (DWA) members and remarked that this was the best turn out to an AGM on record. He thanked everyone for attending and asked members to volunteer donations for the bus/lunch provided. Colin also sent warmest good wishes to Frank Sanderson, our President and Alan Sutcliffe who were sadly unable to attend.

Present:

Colin Speakman (Chairman - Ilkley), Alex McManus (Footpaths Officer - Harrogate), Donald Holliday (Treasurer/Cumbria Rep - Windermere), Chris Grogan (Secretary - Saltaire), Tony Grogan (Website Administrator- Saltaire) Kath Doyle (Minutes & eNewsletter- Yeadon), Judith Smith (Member- Ilkley), David Asher (Member- Burley in Wharfedale), Gordon Tasker (Member – Yeadon), Eileen King (Member – Great Dunmow, Essex) , Julia Jardine (Member- Ellesmere, Shropshire), Terry Coombes (Member – Buckinghamshire) Barbara & Richard Addyman (Members- Herefordshire) Fleur Speakman (Member – Ilkley), Nikki Trask (Member- Sherburn in Elmet) Cheryl Wagstaff (Member- Sherburn in Elmet) Loz Wagstaff (Member – Sherburn in Elmet) Kathryn & David Coulson (Members - Leeds), Pamela & Alan Large (Members- Etwell, Derbyshire), Philippa Hudson (Member- Wetherby), Bill Griffiths (Member- Ilkley), Martin Collison (Member- Ilkley).

Apologies:

Frank Sanderson (President), Tony Hill (Committee Member- Accommodation Providers) Douglas Cosser, Carol Crossland, Ros Langdon, Kate and Dick Eite, Mike Margritt, Heather Pleasance, Alan Sutcliffe, David Williams, Julian Paul, Alison Coney, Mr and Mrs MacBeth, Elaine and Andrew Gibson,

Minutes of the AGM Saturday 26 October 2013 were passed as a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Chris Grogan

Seconded: Julia Jardine

There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Report

Colin presented his report on the year's activities. He said what a year it had been for the Dales Way Association (DWA) and said there were just two words to say- Clare Balding! The profile of the Dales Way had been raised by the 6 "Ramblings" broadcasts on Radio 4. He said what a brilliant and respected presenter Clare was and how the Dales Way was quoted in her latest book "Walking Home". How Clare viewed "Ramblings" as her time off for good behaviour and the real benefits of walking to sort out body and mind. The DWA had received national recognition and some members who walked with Clare had even had their names in the Radio Times!

He reflected on the leap of faith the association had taken two years ago to move from paper base to website and the benefits that had brought to the association. Not least that the money we would have spent on paper and post was now diverted to supporting and improving the Dales Way for all our members.

Colin commented on the excellent relationship and real warmth between the DWA and the National Park authorities and how the Dales Way was one of their top priorities because the Dales Way is a great path in a great landscape.

He paid tribute to all the DWA committee members for their fantastic support during the year.

Treasurer's Report

Donald presented the annual accounts.

Eileen King asked how the new subscription process was progressing. Chris Grogan commented that almost all membership was now on line and there had been no hiccoughs. Only occasional cheques were received.

Donald commented that we had been able to make a contribution to the work at Burneside along with the landowner and the local authority.

Proposed: Eileen King

Seconded: Gordon Tasker

The vote was unanimous.

Sutcliffe and Riley continue as the DWA Accountants for 2014-15

Membership Secretary's Report

Chris presented the Membership Secretary's Report. The DWA currently has 378 membership records with half of those listed as partnerships or paying a family subscription. Chris was confident that membership estimate remained around the 600 mark. We had 20 new family members in 2013 and so far in 2014 we have had 17. Chris commented that members now have the choice of taking out an automatic annual subscription payable by bankers order or Paypal or joining until April 1st 2016. Over 300 subscriptions are paid automatically.

Chris reported that she receives almost daily requests for information on the DW such as the time of year to walk , accommodation queries and questions on the guide books plus comments on how much walkers had enjoyed their Dales Way experience and positive feedback on the enewletter. These requests are shared amongst the committee members for responses, with anything route related going to Alex .

A question was raised by Richard Addyman about Gift Aid and whether everyone had signed up. Chris responded that we had received a Gift Aid payment of £91 this year so far and that she applied twice per year. Eileen King asked whether we had applied retrospectively and Chris reminded members that the decision had been taken not to pursue this because of the lack of reliable historical records. It was agreed that we needed to remind members that they can download the form from the website and post it in to the Secretary.

Action: Kath Doyle to include reminder re Gift Aid to members in the next enewletter.

Website Report

Tony presented his update stating that the website had 2 main purposes. One was to provide DWA members with their own section which was password protected and contained newsletters, minutes of meeting and reports. The other was for those planning to walk the Dales Way for the first time, providing an interactive map, updates on the route such as alternative routes,accommodation listings and a Blog spot to allow people to record and share their personal accounts of walking the DW. Tony stated this now included Audio blogs of Clare Balding's Ramblings programmes on walking the Dales Way.

Visitors to the website up to April 2014 averaged 1400 per month, the latest figures for June-Aug 2014 had increased to 4,000 per month, with a surge in September and October to 8,000 a month (the Clare Balding effect?).

Tony commented that we now hold 2 domain names dalesway.org and dalesway.org.co.uk following a major glitch earlier in the year when we had lost our website. This was because it had been linked to a 3rd party provider and Tony has now established a new and secure service provider.

Facebook has proved to be a very good way of attracting interest in the Dales Way with 427 people "liking" the page plus the collaboration with Hawkshead at Bowness who now provide certificates to Dales Way completers and post their photographs on Facebook.

The Chair recorded his formal thanks to Tony for all his hard work and the phenomenal success of the website.

Footpath Officer's Report

Alex presented his comprehensive Footpath Officer's Report. Alex stated that he had a new definition for those who get lost whilst walking the Dales Way as "doing a Clare Balding" with a reminder to avoid this by taking a map,taking a guide book and paying attention!

Alex had walked areas in the Cumbria/Lakes this year as the majority of complaints about the route are from the M6 onwards and his photographic record has been brought up to date. A new way mark will be introduced along the Dales Way with support from the DWA for the LDNPA section.

Alex commented on the acquisition of the Greenfield forest by the Cam Forest Trust which was an area of woodland 3 times the size of Cam. Restrictions apply to the wagons extracting the trees however they have been observed outside these hours and this has been reported to the YDNPA. He stated that the wagon road does not have the magic of the old Cam Highway but is easier to walk on.

Work on the Hebden Suspension Bridge is complete and the plaque in memory of member Roy Docherty is with the joiner.

Discussions with YDNPA and the landowner re improvements to the footpath by the A683 are progressing, liaison with the local authorities continued regarding a number of diversions and path improvements. The DVD has been regularly updated and all new information boards installed with two additions in Sedbergh and Burneside.

Accommodation Officers Report

Tony Hill provided a written update in his absence. The season has passed without much to report. Anecdotally it appears that providers have been offering an excellent service to DW walkers. Some providers are moving on whilst others have been trying unsuccessfully to sell their business. Tony will continue to visit providers over the winter and update the provider details on the website for 2015.

Election of Officers and Committee

Colin invited any volunteers to join the DWA Committee to support existing Officers in their roles and any future roles that may warrant resource to complete them. Gordon Tasker volunteered to join the committee.

The following people agreed to stand as Officers and Committee Members for the year 2014- 15.

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| President | Frank Sanderson |
| Chairman | Colin Speakman |
| Footpaths Officer | Alex McManus |
| Treasurer | Donald Holliday |
| Secretary | Chris Grogan |
| Web Administrator | Tony Grogan |
| Newsletters/ Minutes | Kath Doyle |
| Accommodation Providers | Tony Hill |
| Committee Member | Gordon Tasker |

Proposed: Judith Smith

Seconded: Eileen King

The vote was unanimous.

Any Other Business

Donald Holliday provided an update on the footpath improvements proposed at Burneside. The original proposal had seen a funding reduction from the original scheme cost of £21,000 to a £5000 award. The good news is that there are two new contributors to the match funding - Ramblers Area and Ramblers Kendal, who along with the New Homes Bonus Scheme, CCC, DWA and Lakeland Hill B & B bring the revised total to £12,200 and this has now gone back to CCC to reprise the work and start as soon as possible.

Kath Doyle asked members for their views on the frequency of the enewsletter, currently annual. It was agreed that we would move to produce the newsletter twice per year with the next edition in April 2015. Kath stressed that she would

like members input to the newsletter regarding their experiences on the Dales Way in the form of articles or poetry or photographs. These can be forwarded direct to Kath via email to: kath.doyle1@ntlworld.com.

Action: Kath to produce newsletter for April 2015

Eileen King expressed her disappointment that she had been unable to secure a memorial seat anywhere on the Dales Way route. It was agreed to look further outside the National Park boundaries and see if a landowner might be willing accept the proposal.

Action: Alex to progress this with landowners

David Asher spoke to members about the proposal for a bridge to provide access for walkers across the river in Burley in Wharfedale. Recognising that this falls outside the Dales Way route members agreed to provide support as individuals to the planning application. Note the closing date is 13/11/14. Details can be found via this link:

<http://burleybridge.com/news.php>

Colin thanked everyone for coming, especially those members who had travelled from afar, and the meeting closed at 3:30 pm.