

## **Minutes of the Ringwood & Fordingbridge Footpath Society 45th AGM – March 18<sup>th</sup> 2019**

### **Apologies:**

Liz & Andy Holmes, Kelvin Winch, Cynthia Whyte, Fiona Brockhurst.

### **Minutes:**

The minutes of the AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2018 were accepted and signed .

### **Matters Arising:**

There were no matters arising.

### **Chairman's Report -** See attached.

Rowan Brockhurst welcomed the Chairman's Report and thanked her for all her work.

Rowan is standing down as Vice Chairman , having been on the Committee since the Society was founded and we now need someone to stand as Vice Chairman with a view to taking over as Chairman in due course.

### **Footpath Matters -** See attached report from Kelvin Winch.

Rowan Brockhurst thanked Kelvin for all his work during the year.

### **Treasurers Report:**

The Society's accounts remain healthy with total funds as at 28<sup>th</sup> February of £6607.

The small surplus for this year, as in previous years, is mainly due to donations which were a grant from Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley Parish Council and monies from Ramblers Holidays for holidays booked by members as well as £205 from the late David Seymour. It is hoped that we can erect a bench at Poulner Lakes in his memory and Kelvin Winch is progressing this through the Town Council.

Overheads continue to be carefully managed.

The Committee is proposing that both subscriptions and fees for evening meetings should remain the same.

The accounts were presented and, there being no questions, their acceptance and the level of fees, together with the reports by the Chairman and Footpath Secretary was proposed by Patrick Whiteing and seconded by Rowan Brockhurst. They were accepted with no dissensions.

### **Election of Officers:**

The following were elected unopposed, having been proposed by Rowan Brockhurst and seconded by Gillian Habbin: Ruth Croker (Chairman), Hazel Winch (Secretary), Jacky Jones (Treasurer), David Knapp (Auditor), Mike Osborne, Catherine Avery Jones, Marion Westcott, Julie Whiteing, Kelvin Winch, Terry Jones (Committee Members).

We welcome Jacky Jones as our Treasurer.

Catherine Avery Jones will be standing down this year so we need a Walks Programme Secretary as well as a Vice Chairman.

The whole membership are very grateful to Tricia Holloway for her careful management of the accounts over the last 4 years and although she is standing down as Treasurer she will still play a large part in organising social events.

A small presentation was made to her by the Chairman.

Graham New (Vice President) spoke of the enormous amount Rowan Brockhurst has done for the Society since setting it up and becoming member number 1. He will remain an integral part of our work and continue to give advice to anyone needing to draw on his extensive experience.

A small presentation was made in recognition of his long service.

**Any Other Business:**

There being no other business there was a break for refreshments followed by an informative talk from Counsellor Edward Heron about his role with the Countryside Service of the HCC

**Date of the next AGM:** 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## RINGWOOD AND FORDINGBRIDGE FOOTPATH SOCIETY.

AGM 18th March 2019. Our 45th

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

The Society has continued to work with Hampshire County Council, the New Forest National Park and our 13 local parishes to try to ensure the good condition of our rights of way network.

#### Membership.

Total membership. February 2019 300 (Family 99 Single 102).

January 2018 295.

#### Footpath Matters.

See separate report.

#### Walks Programme.

The walks programme offered 419 miles of walking. (Last year 428 miles and the previous year 476 miles).

If you have not already done so please join the email alert system so that you can be informed of any unforeseen matters. This year it has been used to warn of ferry changes and road closures.

The New Forest National Park Walking Festival again took place in October. I led 2 walks which were well supported by members and visitors.

#### Publicity.

The Society was represented at Fordingbridge, Ellingham and Frogham. As usual visitors to our stand showed interest in our work.

I also took a display to the Christmas in Fordingbridge event and the National Park's Volunteer Fair. These last 2 events publicise our work to a different audience. In both places we attracted a lot of interest.

#### Waymark.

This publication continues to be popular.

Waymarks will be sent to all members unless they choose to opt out. It is the view of your Committee that when you sign up to become a member of our Society you sign up to receiving Waymark

Many copies are hand delivered. Thank you to those who deliver it. With increases in postage the single membership fee only just covers the cost of printing and posting their Waymark.

Our membership Secretary who is also involved in the delivery having with his wife, Jacky taken over the distribution would like to explore the possibility of sending some Waymarks to members by email to reduce delivery costs. Copies will continue to be posted to members unless receipt by email is requested.

#### Social.

Once again we have had a successful Christmas Party and Trig Point Walk.

The Bring and Share Lunch was enjoyed. We all had plenty to eat.

Unfortunately it was not possible to organise a mince pie walk due to the unavailability of a suitable venue. A few members were, as an alternative, able to join me on the coffee break of a walk I led just before Christmas on a very wintry day.

A new venue will be sought for next year.

#### Evening Meetings.

There have been 4 meetings with speakers also our AGM and Christmas Party.

It is good that many members who are unable to walk with us join us on these evenings.

Website.

Our new website is operational. Changes have been made.

Representation.

I have continued to represent members and other walkers on the New Forest National Park Local Access Forum and Hampshire Ramblers Area Council.

I also attend Hampshire Ramblers Footpath Committee as does Kelvin Winch.

In addition I am a member of the Advisory Group of the New Forest Recreation Strategy Group.

Thanks to:

HCC Countryside Service staff.

Rowan Brockhurst who as always been a valuable source of advice during the year. He has decided to retire as Vice Chairman. More of this later.

Kelvin Winch Footpath Secretary. He also organises working parties to remedy problems and make improvements on rights of way in our 13 parishes.

Hazel Winch our Honorary Secretary who until recently has also organised the distribution of Waymark.

Tricia Holloway Honorary Treasurer

Terry Jones Membership Secretary

Catherine Avery-Jones Walks Programme Secretary

Julie Whiteing Publicity

Marion Westcott Editor.

Mike Osborne Website Manager

Social Secretary. This post has remained vacant. The role has been carried out by members of the committee particularly Hazel Julie and Tricia.

Barry Thornton who manages the email alert system.

The footpath work team.

Those who deliver Waymark.

Everyone of you who have supported our activities

AOB

The England Coast Path and the Recreation Management Strategy. Progress on finalising the route is slow because of the current political turmoil and I am told progress can be expected after a general election.

The Historic Routes Project. Work is ongoing and progressing.

The Deregulation Bill. Implementation is still awaited. The Bill has passed through the Houses of Commons and Lords. Guidelines for its use have yet to be written and agreed.

A Vice Chair for the Society is essential. This person should become Chairman in due course.

Ruth Croker

Chairman.

## FOOTPATH SECRETARY'S REPORT

At the last AGM the NFDC New Forest outside the National Park Mitigations Strategy was mentioned. We submitted our thoughts on which paths it would be desirable to improve that meet the aims of the strategy, but sadly we have heard nothing further from HCC or NFDC. I hope that our speaker this evening will be able to shed some light on the future plans.

Last year our volunteers carried out major Rights of Way surveys in two of our largest parishes Ringwood and Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley, many will be unknown to most of you, as they do not take part in any of our walks, but they carry out much of the voluntary work and have done so for many years one has been doing this from the day the Society was founded.

The results of the last survey show almost the same number of problems as when these paths were surveyed three years ago. Fingerposts and Waymark discs being damaged or missing constitute the majority of the problems reported.

An increasing concern for most walkers is the dividing up of fields with electric fences for horse paddocks, often with inadequate means of crossing the fences. We are finding more paths with very poor surfaces due to poaching by cattle and in fact two paths from Rockford Farm up to Rockford Common are impassable without wellingtons, as the mud is too deep for walking boots. These are paths 714 & 720 in E.H.&I.

Several long term problems have not been resolved and some some would require action against landowners. This situation is not unique to our part of Hampshire and HCC have promised to produce a policy on action against landowners. We await this with interest.

Unfortunately one of the major long standing problems in Ringwood is still Footpath 38 from the end of Forest Lane across St. Andrews Lodge then onto the forest near Knaves Ash. This is a complex matter so again we would ask all members to avoid this route until the problem is resolved.

During the year HCC have carried out major works on the boardwalks at Damerham and you will have seen in Waymark that a number of our members have assisted in the replacement of a boardwalk on the AVP just off the Bickerley. We have agreed to assist Ringwood Town Council in clearing and removing all the debris from Ringwood Footpath 42, which runs alongside Sundial Cottage at Crow. We have cut back the growth on this path many times, but now it needs a more thorough clearing, including the grubbing out of saplings. Throughout the year our members will undertake many other minor clearances and where possible replace waymarks, as well as assisting with more major works.

Our surveys this year will cover the parishes of Breamore, Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne & Whitsbury. I hope to allocate the paths to be surveyed by the end of the month, for completion by the end of September and thank all those taking part in this once again.

As always we hope that you continue to enjoy the extensive Rights of Way network in our area and report any problems that you encounter.

Kelvin Winch  
Footpath Secretary