

# **RECORDS OF OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS**

## **Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group**

### **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27th June 2017 at SRSB, Mappin Street, Sheffield**

#### **1. CHAIRMAN**

Christine welcomed everyone.

#### **2. APOLOGIES**

Betsy and Mel.

#### **3. MINUTES of the last AGM were accepted as a true record.**

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

None.

**5. TREASURER'S REPORT** Stan Wainwright (Treasurer).  
The Treasurer's report was circulated. Stan commented that this last financial year has not been a good one in that we have not had as many donations and fundraising is down on the previous financial year. Eric and Stan have written 24 letters to local companies requesting financial assistance. We have only had 4 responses, 2 to say that they support other groups and 2 one off donations, one from Towsure £25.00 and one from our Building Society of £100. The accounts were audited by Colin Newton on 29th May 2017. The Treasurer's Report was accepted as a true record.

## **6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

### **A - WALKS**

Walking is what we do so let's talk about that first. In the last year SVIWG has done:

12 Tuesday walks including 2 specially designed to enable Betsy to join us

12 Wednesday walks including a Christmas lunch walk

12 Thursday walks

12 Sunday walks including a New Year lunch walk

4 walks we did on the group holiday in Berwick on Tweed

1 coach ramble walk around Buxton

The Sheffield Round Walk - all 17 miles of it

### **Total of 54 walks in the year**

If we add it all up this is again not far short of 300 miles. All of this has been reported in the newsletters thanks to Gail.

The lynch pin of this walking programme is John Bater who finds leaders for us and who also organises guides for Thursdays and Sundays. A very special thank you to John. Thanks also to David Cadet and Norman Pearson who organise and lead the Tuesday walks. Their efforts are much appreciated. Thanks also to Philip Tims and his hearing-impaired group of walkers who contribute to the cost of the coach ramble and who joined us on that day out. The bottom line is that we are keeping up with our record of about 300 miles per year. All of this reported in newsletters thanks to Gail.

### **B - SAFETY ON WALKS:**

I make no apology for reminding everyone about safety on walks. Not letting the group get too strung out because of the risk of losing people or of an incident occurring that we are not aware of. Leaders set the pace to suit the group as a

whole. Do not walk in front of the leader. Pause at stiles, the tops of hills etc to allow others to catch up. Use the radios and if you are back marking and do not hesitate to call the leader to wait. We have bought new set of radios. David and Norman will have the radios on all Tuesday walks in the future.

**C - DOGS ON WALKS:** We spoke about this at last AGM, and it is still an issue. There have been one or two incidents recently where a dog has knocked into a VIP walker and nearly caused a nasty accident. We have Alan here tonight to talk about guide dogs.

**D - MEMBERSHIP:** 7 new members have gone onto our database in the past year, 6 of whom are VIPs, but I am not sure how many of these have been out on walks. I only recognise 1 name as a regular walker. That suggests we need to be better at following up new members and ensuring that they get the support they need to come out on walks. Overall membership stands at 90 of whom 34 are VIPs. That compares with 135 at this time last year of whom 50 were VIPs.

**E - LOST FRIENDS:** This has been an especially sad year. We have lost dear friends in Mike Anderson, Mick Charlesworth, Ted Ellerton, Norma Jackson, June Hegarty and Chris Darling. They will all be sadly missed and our thoughts are with their families.

**F - PUBLIC ATTENTION:** We know that Matt Writtle's book 'Sunday: A Portrait of 21st Century England' is being published. SVIWG feature as one of the chapters in that book with some good photos of the group out on a Sunday walk last year. Sarah Bell a researcher from Exeter University is

engaged in a research project on visual impairment and the natural environment. She has been out with the group twice and will be joining us one more time. She is also talking to VIPs on an individual basis. Charlotte Jacoba Conelia van di Lijn a student from Sheffield University now has approval for her dissertation research project into use of Geographic Information Systems by visually impaired people. She is hoping to join walks in July/August.

**G - HOLIDAYS:** In September 2016 some 32 of us set off for Berwick upon Tweed. Local Ramblers were more than helpful in devising and leading walks for us. We walked round the old ramparts of the city, around Holy Island (both in the fog as I recall), along the banks of the Tweed (in the rain), the coastal path from Berwick to St Abbs Head (in glorious sunshine) to see the launch of their lifeboat and the coastal path from Craster to Beadnell. We found it especially helpful to have our own coach with us for the week so that we were quite independent of public transport. That seems to have set a precedent for future holidays. We decided to go to Whitby for the 2017 holiday. Special Tribute to Hilary. At this point I want to pay a very special tribute to Hilary. All arrangements for the holidays, sorting out hotels, getting the best deals on accommodation, working out room allocations, arranging transport etc. is down to Hilary. Hilary also sorts out the pub bookings for the Christmas and New Year lunches, makes all the arrangements with SRSB for this AGM supper and gets us a coach for the coach ramble. We are ever beholden to Hilary, thank you.

**H - FUND RAISING:** My thanks to all those valiant folks who did the Sheffield Round Walk on 17 June. It will be a while before we know how much we raised but early indications suggest a goodly amount. A vote of thanks to SRSB for all

they do for us. (Printing, Room Space, Database, distribution of newsletter).

**I - WEB SITE:** Thank you to Christine Whittaker. We are still the only visually impaired walking group on the web. We get quite a lot of enquiries from other parts of the country.

**J - TO DO LIST FOR 2017-2018 :** 1) Fundraising 2) More recruitment, especially of VIPs 3) Fostering new members 4) Holiday venue for 2018 5) Coach Rambles - possibly to the seaside? 6) Look towards a new Executive 7) Last but not least GUIDES. If it wasn't for you this group would not exist. A vote of thanks for all guides. 8) Dogs on Walks. We will always try to have some free running for the dogs, but this is not always possible, especially where there is livestock in the fields or where the path is narrow. Firstly, it is up to the leader to say when dogs can be let off the lead. In making their decision leaders will be bearing in mind that dogs should not be off the lead near roads, anywhere there is livestock, either in the field we are in or adjacent fields. Nor should dogs be off lead if we are walking on a narrow path where dogs running up and down the line of walkers runs the risk of knocking people over, especially if they pick up a stick in their mouths as some of them are prone to do. Once the leader has said that dogs may be let off the lead it is up to the guide dog owner to release their own dog but they must make sure that a sighted guide takes responsibility for keeping an eye on the dog. If the sighted guide is you, then **YOU DO NOT TAKE YOUR EYE OFF THE DOG**. Ask the guide dog owner to call the dog back the minute you spot a possible problem. Finally, remember that dogs must be on leads for coffee and lunch stops. á We may have to restrict free running to one dog at a time.

## **7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Christine is standing down as Chair this year. After confirmation from members the new Committee will be:

### **Officers:**

**Chair:** *David Cadet*

**Vice Chair:** *Christine Hewitt*

**Walks Planner and Co-ordinator:** *John Bater*

**Membership Secretary:** *Brian Hirst*

**Treasurer:** *Stan Wainwright*

**Social Secretary:** *Hilary Myers*

**Minutes Secretary:** *Pauline Bullivant*

**Newsletter Editor:** *Gail Fagan*

**Other Committee Members:** *Eric, Sue and Carol (co-opted, and who may take up membership duties)*

*David, on behalf of all the members, gave an enormous thank you to Christine for all the hard work that she has put in during her time as Chair. She will be a hard act to follow.*

## **8. HOLIDAYS**

*A Canal Trip is planned for Tuesday 15 August 'Ethel' 57 ft canal barge moored at Thorne, Doncaster. She carries 12 passengers. The trip is planned to start at 10 am and be back for 4 pm. Christine is taking a car and asked for 2 other car drivers so that we could accommodate 12 people. The cost of the trip is £8 per person on a first come first served basis.*

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

*Gill Thompson - When Ted died in January, Jill was in charge of his wake. As part that Jill took the opportunity to attend the AGM and arrange for everyone to have a free drink on Ted. Jill proposed a toast to Ted and everyone raised their glasses.*

*Dogs on Leads - comment from Mary on behalf of Ken - The walks leader should inform walkers when dogs can be let off*

*the lead as soon as possible.*

*Walks for visually impaired youth - Martin who organises the Youth Club took the AGM as an opportunity to promote walks for the visually impaired youth.*

*SRSB staff to promote SVIWG for newly registered - comment from Olwyn - it is important that SRSB staff promote SVIWG for newly registered. Social Services - comment from Jack - wanted a reminder to go to Social Services to point people towards us (SVIWG). Doctors Surgeries - Carol suggested we explore the possibility of promoting SVIWG in doctors' surgeries.*

### **10 GUEST SPEAKER - Alan Thorpe.**

*Alan gave a talk about Guide Dogs and how they have an impact on the walking group. He gave a thought provoking talk, bringing ideas to the table for discussion. Topics he touched on included:*

*The merits and pitfalls of one or more dogs being let off the lead.*

*Free running - who is responsible?*

*Calling the dog back?*

*Burning off steam. Throwing sticks.*

*Dog sitting service. Members engaged with Alan offering their opinion. As time was running out it was agreed to bring the discussion to an end, and Alan said he would be willing to come to talk to us again on another date. David gave thanks to Alan.*

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***Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held  
on 24th July 2014 at SRSB, Mappin Street,  
Sheffield***

***1. Chairman***