

## **STOKE LODGE RAMBLERS CHAIR'S REPORT to the AGM for 2019-20**

2019-20 was arguably the most challenging year in the Club's history and will remain in all of our memories as the 'year of Covid 19' and we desperately hope all members remain well as the second wave threatens to engulf us.

### **Review of the year**

Following last year's AGM, Christmas Lunch and New Year's great walk who could have predicted the lockdown that was forced on us in March 2020. First a massive thank you to the committee members and walks leaders who have worked so hard to keep the club as an effective walking and social community at a time of constantly changing Government advice as to whether we were allowed to walk. At least one of our number, when walking with another group was challenged by the police, who said we are not allowed to walk in groups of more than 6. This prompted research by many and Margaret Ruse coming up with the 'Ramblers' guidance that organised outdoor activity is allowed in groups of up to 30 as long as Covid secure procedures are followed.

Perhaps the most innovative walking of the year was the Bristol Bridges Walks inspired by the book **From Brycgstowe to Bristol in 45 Bridges** and the Konigsberg Bridge problem where a city's bridges all have to be crossed in the shortest distance crossing each one only once. We have started and God willing we will finish the project next year.

Thanks go to Sue Hazelden for keeping our spirits up with her regular newsletter linking to fascinating walks, interesting books, local news and amusing stories.

**Membership:** Numbers for last year were around the 55 and we have 36 renewals to date this year and expect membership to drop to around 45. I remind all of the request I made last year for every member to make it a personal target to introduce at least one new member in the coming year and this is even more important given some senior members of the club have now retired from active walking. Please remember to pay your renewal membership fees to our treasurer as soon as possible.

**Walks leaders:** Margaret Ruse will thank you in her report but the heart of the club is its leaders who tirelessly walk out routes and lead us to places new. The Committee has provided an appendix to the leaders guide on the website to guide us through the regulations of Covid. Our associate membership of the Ramblers has never been more important as we use their guidance on the legality of the size and behaviours of our walking groups.

**Website:** thanks to Sue O'Hara and Sue Hazelden for maintaining this vital communication, particularly for uploading the adverts for upcoming walks and photos of past walks which has become increasingly valuable in the period of the pandemic. The system of meeting at the start of a walks and not sharing lifts and starting at 9.30 has worked very well recently.

### **Highlights of the past year**

**The Christmas Meal** at Long Ashton Golf Course, superbly organised by Hilda Ball and supported by walks leaders was felt to be so good we booked again for this Christmas, but sadly the Government restrictions have forced us to cancel.

**New Year's Walk:** a great success thanks to Sue Hazelden's organisation.

**Spring Social:** Was all set to go with Gareth Roberts a speaker from Bristol Ornithologists and we have provisionally re booked him for 24th April or 1st May 2021.

**Summer Outing:** Andy Renshaw had planned an excellent day out by train and ferry, but sadly travel was not possible on our planned dates. It is in reserve for next year.

**The September 20 Swanage Away weekend** has had to be cancelled and we are now planning to run it from Sunday 26th to 29th September 2021 at the Pines Hotel. The pandemic has forced costs up and we have asked those who would like to go to confirm they will be happy to pay the increased price of around £385 ( from an expected £330). So far 15 have signed up and I must have replies from others as soon as possible. We have been reassured that there will not be charges for cancellations up to 14 days before leaving Bristol.

**Tree:** You will remember we have sponsored a tree on Trymside Open Space near Paul and Sue Hazelden's house and they have been keeping an eye on it in the drought of last spring. It seems to be surviving and Paul is ministering to it regularly.

**Archive:** We have now deposited copies of the AGM papers, walks programme and newsletters with Bristol Archives for the first 30 years of the club. If you would like to access these papers simply book a visit on line and request documents with accession number 46490.

**Future Walking:** Despite the pandemic we have offered at least as many walks as usual since June when we reopened for business in the new regime. Given the importance of walking for mental and physical health and the wonderful companionship the club offers I am sure we will all continue to offer our services to keep the club flourishing. The breaking news that lockdown in England will be imposed from 5th November to 2nd December will doubtless test our patience but walking in pairs is allowed and it could be a good opportunity to walk out future walks.

**Finally:** Do not forget to renew membership via Lorna and Liz, let me know if you want to join the away break to Swanage in September and THANK YOU all for the support you have offered the club over the last year. Keep Well.

David McGregor