

MINUTES OF THE FOOTLOOSE AGM 12th DECEMBER NOVEMBER, 2021

Venue Old Mill, Bardsea nr Ulverston

Committee present: Derwent Donaldson (Chair and Minutes), Sue Brearley, Norman French, Tony Mayo. Phil Walker, absent with apologies Jean Savage

Attendance 36

1. Welcome

The chairman thanked all those who were in attendance for coming to the

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from the following members: Tony Lashmar, Deb Middleton, Kate Grindley, David Armstrong, Viv Musalewski, and Libby and Dan Simpson.

3. Approval of the 2018 AGM minutes

These had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting and the chairman asked for someone to propose that the minutes be adopted. The motion was proposed by Tony Mayo and Simon Hughes, and seconded by Sue Brearley. The minutes were duly adopted.

4. Matters arising

There was a proposal from Roy Garriock that the club should organise shorter walks in parallel with the current longer walks. The chairman reported that the committee had experimented with this idea. Dianne Club had for instance organised two successful shorter walks in the Arnsdale and Silverdale area. There were also several others, but there had been a shortage of leaders. The club would still be prepared to organise shorter walks but leaders were needed, but this would depend upon leaders being forthcoming.

Phil Walker also pointed out that shorter walks would have to start and finish at the same point as the main walks.

5. Chairman's report

The chairman informed the meeting as follows:

The last AGM was 24th November 2019 just over 2 years ago at this venue, when our speaker was Paddy Dillon who writes guides for Cicerone.

At the time we were had plans for a visit to Black Sail Youth Hostel in March, a visit to Sardinia, in April, and a Summer Social at Oxen park followed by a visit to Edinburgh in October.

And then there was covid, and our lives became much more regulated than we had ever experienced previously. The last two years seems like a long time in a different country. Nonetheless the club has survived and for much of the time we have been able to continue our regular walking programme, albeit with some modifications.

Our visit to Black Sail organised by Susie Rendell was our first casualty, and this was followed by the Sardinian visit organised largely by Phil Walker. In each instance we were able to retrieve a large proportion of our money in excess of 90%. For this we have to thank the efforts of the leaders and the generosity of our hosts.

Then there was no summer social and finally the visit to Edinburgh which Sue Brearley organised was rolled over till the following year.

From March to September 2020 the walking programme was suspended. We re-started the programme in September, and continued with groups of 12 walkers with walkers contacting the leaders to book their places in advance. This worked quite well until January 2021 when a further lockdown was imposed. Restrictions were lifted and we were able to recommence the walk programme in April 2021. Since then we have lifted the restrictions on numbers, and the requirement to book the walk in advance. Turnout has improved markedly with up to 20 people attending recent walks. Things are now returning to more normal and we look ahead in 2022 to a week in Mull, at Arle Lodge. The trip is full for the moment but we have a waiting list, and if you would like to join the list then please let John Davies know, and you will be added to the list. If places become available they will be awarded in priority according to who added their name to the list first. John said that people should notify him by e-mail (his address is winander@aol.com)

In addition we are currently planning a summer social, and an autumn getaway possibly to Berwick on Tweed. (Sue Brearley informed the Chair, that accommodation was proving to be a problem in Berwick). The chairman informed the meeting there might be changes to the programme. In addition Phil Walker has informed me that the walks programme for the first quarter was almost full.

At the moment travel to Europe has resumed but there are still difficulties and no guarantee that the rules will not change at short notice. For the time being our planning will focus on events within the UK.

In the meantime although the membership has fallen during the covid epidemic it has fallen by less than the committee had expected and that it has started to recover with several new members joining this year and a burst of new members in the last months. Norman will give us up to date figures.

I would like to thank the membership who have remained loyally attached to the club, and participated in the activities which we have been able to organise.

It has been a difficult prolonged crisis and I would also like to thank the following people: the walks leaders for helping us to carry on the essential walks programme during the last two years. Phil Walker for his heroic effort in organising the walks programme and for his invaluable leadership given during the planning of the Sardinia trip and the recovery of our funds when it was cancelled. Susie Rendell for organising the Black Sail event. Sue Brearley for organising the Edinburgh event and keeping this particular pot boiling for a very long time. Her faith was repaid by the excellent time we had in the city this October.

In addition I would like to thank John Davies for gathering the support for Mull 2022, and for collecting the deposits from the participants. We will have serious planning to do once Christmas is over.

The web site is now well established in its new home thanks to Ann. She has become a sort of Queen of web sites and is looking after the U3A site as well as hours so thank you Ann for a job well done..

Now moving on from Covid, and looking forwards –

When an event is organised we often need to pay a deposit promptly, sometimes before we can gather funds from the likely participants. How long do you imagine it would have taken in to gather the deposits for this social? In this case the Old Mill would not hold the venue until a deposit was received and it was necessary for a committee member to pay. So in some cases it is the committee members themselves who pay the deposit, hoping for reimbursement at a later stage. To help to ensure we have sufficient funds to pay deposits in future we are not having a guest speaker at this meeting and we will not be making our customary charitable donation this year. This will improve our position by about £200.

Changes to the membership subscription would have been kept until it could be announced during the chairman's report. However an announcement had to be made prior to the meeting when folk started to ask Norman if they could have membership forms and pay their fee. The committee have also been considering the membership fee which is currently £5. We have cogitated at length on this matter and we think we have come up with a solution. We are forced to the conclusion that we should increase the membership fee to £10, and we intend to do this with effect from 1st January 2022. I am pleased to say that this fee will be discounted by £5 for any member who completes a membership form, and returns it to the Treasurer with the payment (cash or cheque) on or before the 31st of January each year.

During the lockdown the club members raised more than £200 to provide a memorial for Victor Middleton, who passed away on 13th August 2018. The memorial takes the shape of a bench for people to sit and enjoy the view over Coniston from Brantwood. The bench of wood was hand crafted by the carpenter at Brantwood and it has been erected at a point near Crag Head. It is accessible from both the gardens at Brantwood and from a footpath which avoids the estate and entrance to this area is free. The balance of the money which was raised has been given as a charitable donation to the work of Brantwood. The club's commemoration of Victor will also be recorded in the Book of Remembrance at Brantwood.

Overall Covid has been a set back to the club we have lost members and cancelled a lot of activities, but we are still here, we have kept up the walks programme and finally two years later we are holding our AGM with more than half the club membership present. The walks programme for the first quarter of the year is two thirds full and our programme of events for next year is filling.

6. Treasurer, Insurance and Membership Report (Norman French)

The Treasurer reported that the club had a balance of £2,186 but that the Xmas social would cost circa £1,000 and this would be taken from the accounts soon. Outgoings in the accounts included £100 paid to Ann Holroyd, who had overpaid for the Edinburgh trip. There was also a payment of £200 to Brantwood for the bench in memory of Victor Middleton. The deposit of £500 for Mull had been paid. Norman re-iterated that often took months to collect all the subscriptions and this was a waste of time. In some instances it took 6 months to collect all the funds.

The membership had fallen from 84 to 63. Some of the leavers were members who we rarely saw and the reduction in numbers has made the club leaner and there is a higher proportion of the membership participating in activities. The club had also managed to recruit 5 new members this year. The Treasurer was applauded following his report.

Norman also asked the meeting to thank Derwent for the hard work he had put in.

7. Walks Co-ordinator (Phil Walker)

Phil reported that the response to his publication of the 1st Quarter 2022 walks programme had been very good. There was one date remaining, the 16th of January. Jonny Lovett had offered an emergency walk and if no one else wished to take up the 16th then it was his. No one offered to take up the walk and it was allocated to Jonny.

Phil said that although the walk programme had been filled it had been taken up by the same faces as in previous quarters and were some new faces were needed. If you were prepared to organise a walk then you should give Phil or Derwent (thewalkerz@gmail.com; wenty2d@gmail.com)

We would return to the normal quarterly planning meetings in 2022. This would give us the chance to review the list of walks proposed and shuffle them about so that we did not end up going to Cartmel 3 weeks in a row. The short walks in the summer evenings would be continued as would alternative short Sunday walks provided that took off from the same start point as the harder option.

8. Election

The chairman reported that the committee had in spite of trying, not managed to find the elixir of youth and the committee were all getting older. In short the membership could not rely on them always being there. When he appealed to the membership earlier in the year he had received two offers from members who had volunteered to join the committee, John Davies and Sue Rigg. He proposed that they should be made members of the committee, and moved the motion. It was duly seconded by Ken Shaw. The motion was passed unanimously by the meeting of 36 members.

The chairman also reported that 4 committee members had served their 3 year term, and they would offer themselves for re-election for a further year reserving the right to leave the committee at the end of the year. He asked for someone to propose the motion that Tony Mayo, Sue Brearley, Norman French, and he be re-elected. The motion was proposed by John Lee and seconded by Cliff Etherden and Isobel Williamson.

9. AOB

Cliff Etherden asked Norman how much money he felt the club would need as a float. Norman agreed that around £1,000 would be enough to provide a buffer to pay deposits for club events.

Other participants at the meeting raised various different venues where the club might consider holding events. Sue Brearley pointed out that there was a problem with the YHA, some could not provide accommodation for sufficient numbers. We could consider hotels but these would be more expensive than hostels.

Venues which were proposed were Borrodale House, near Mallaig, the Isle of Man, Cornwall and Wales. The chairman offered to consider these in view of possible problems with accommodation at Berwick.

John Davies raised the question about how many members or past members of the club may have died as a result of covid, and might there be an appropriate way to remember them. The chairman said that as far as he knew we had not lost any current members, but he would take it up with the membership to see if any previous members could be found.

10. Date for the next AGM.

The next AGM will be held in late November or early December 2022. It would be held in the Kendal side of the county.

The meeting was adjourned at almost 7pm.