

**The Northamptonshire Shamblers**  
**Minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting**  
**Held on 6 August 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom online**

1. **Apologies for Absence** – received from Chris Moore, Denny Reeder, Terry Needham, Josie Blackwell, Angie Watts, Graeme White, Pat Abbot-Paijmans.
2. **Minutes of the AGM held on 8 August 2019**, which are on the website, were proposed by Jean Mole and seconded by Sue Milner.

3. **Chair's Report**

A copy of the report will be found at the end of these minutes. Finbarr explained the unusual way of holding this AGM due to the COVID-19 virus which prevents us from meeting in person.

He mentioned the successful Away Weekend in Whitby, which was held for the first time last year. Also, the night time Christmas stroll around Summer Leys, however, due to the COVID-19 virus, it looks like we won't be able to do this again this December.

The Away Weekend to Bournemouth this year, due to take place from 18 – 20 September, has regretfully been cancelled. However, we are proposing to have an Away Day to Carsington Water in Derbyshire on Sunday 20 September instead. The Away Weekend to Bournemouth will hopefully now take place in September 2021.

4. **Treasurer's Report**

- 4.1 Jean Mole explained that the membership year has now been brought in line with our accounting year, i.e. August to August. Membership fees for 1 January to 31 July 2020 were therefore reduced to £5 to reflect the shortened membership year. Fees for the period 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021 will only be £3, instead of the usual £8, due to missed walks during 2020.
- 4.2 During the year August 2019 to August 2020, we had 29 paid up members with an income of £151. We also had 7 guest walkers producing an income of £14. For the coming year from August 2020 to 31 July 2021, we currently have 19 paid up members, including 3 new members.
- 4.3 Our main outgoings were £99.95 for Web Hosting, but that is for two years until August 2022; Insurance Policy was £63 (we negotiated a three months extension due to COVID-19); we purchased some Hi-Viz jackets for £55; Church Hall hire for the last AGM was £25, and we also purchased a First Aid Kit and Accident Log Book.
- 4.4 We collected £80 in the charity box last year for the 'Away With Pain' charity and agreed to donate £20 from our funds to bring the total to £100. However, this Charity was unable to accept the cheque, so instead we donated the funds to 'Shire Community Service'.
- 4.5 Our bank balance on 1 August 2019 was £664.27, and our balance at 1 August 2020 stands at £508.84. We therefore experienced a 'loss' of £155 for the current year, but some of our purchases mentioned were one offs and will not be repeated. As we still have a healthy balance, the committee has agreed that there is no need to increase our membership fee,

which will remain at £8 for new members for 2020/2021. As mentioned previously, existing members who paid £5 in January, will only pay an additional £3 for membership to 31 July 2021. Guest walkers will continue to pay £2 per walk.

## **5. Election of Committee**

In the absence of any further volunteers to join the Committee, Ruth confirmed that the current Committee have agreed to stand for a further year:

Finbarr Finn – Chair

Ruth Emmerson – Secretary

Jean Mole – Treasurer

Sue Milner & Stuart Emmerson – Committee members

## **6. Planning for 2021**

6.1 We currently have planned walks for the first six months of 2021, except for the Sunday walk on 16 May – so any offers to lead this walk would be appreciated.

6.2 It was agreed to hold our Away Day on 13 June 2021 (the second weekend of June to avoid Father's Day). Finbarr suggested going to Chipping Norton in the Cotswolds as he and Sue Milner have done a recce there, and he can arrange a five mile walk. Most present were agreeable to this suggestion.

## **7. Any Other Business**

7.1 It was agreed that we would continue to collect for our current charity – Northamptonshire Carers – as we have had very little opportunity to donate anything so far this year.

7.2 Finbarr confirmed that he has sent our walk details for the rest of the year to Village Connect. However, they are happy to do a feature on the Shamblers in their magazine early next year. This means we will have to write a suitable article with photos by November. Other free magazines were mentioned, such as Raunds Round Up, Abington & Around and Over 50's. There is also a Facebook page called 'What's on in Northampton' that Ruth's daughter will put her in touch with so we can advertise our walks there too.

7.3 Finbarr suggested going to the Gower Peninsular for our Away Weekend in 2022 and to stay in Mumbles. As this was agreed, the Committee will be able to do a recce of suitable walks in the area well in advance and also find suitable accommodation for members.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm – our thanks for all who had managed to master technology and join the meeting.

## Northamptonshire Shamblers

### Chair's Report 2020

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to this, our first and hopefully our last, AGM to be held via Zoom. My sincere thanks to our Secretary, Ruth, and her daughter Anna Pearce for organizing the online wizardry.

Little did we realise at last year's AGM what an unusual, unprecedented and difficult 12 months we had in store.

During 2019, after our AGM we had 3 Sunday Walks - Yardley Hastings, Sulgrave and Woodnewton. These walks again illustrated the wonderful diversity that Northamptonshire has to offer us walkers.

A new undertaking for our club last year was our first Weekend Away. Based in Whitby from 13 - 15 September, the club organized a varied programme of 5 walks encompassing moorland, beach, clifftops, woodland and old railway trails. We saw wonderful scenery and a wide variety of wildlife. We enjoyed lots of laughs and lots of lovely grub - like the ice-creams outside the pub in Lastingham, the teas by the spray of Falling Foss waterfall, and of course the fish and chips we enjoyed as a group in the famous Magpie Restaurant in Whitby.

I believe 16 people participated over the weekend - of course not everyone took in every walk, but this flexibility is attractive to our members. Some mistakes may have been made, the next time we walk along a beach, I had better check the tides! And our clifftop walk, whilst being breathtakingly beautiful, may at 7 miles or so have been challenging even to our fittest members.

We also incorporated a photo contest into the weekend, thanks to Graeme White for judging and congrats to Caroline Dunkley on her winning photo. Looking back I think the weekend was a resounding success.

Also in 2019 we had, what has become one of the favourite events in our calendar, the night time Christmas stroll at Summer Leys. 17 people enjoyed our torch lit stroll around the lake and also the good humour and delicacies in the bird hide after. As the local authority is now locking the carpark each evening we had to organize access to keys last year and thanks to Ruth and Stuart for doing this.

So we entered 2020 full of optimism and with a cracking turnout of 26 walkers for our January walk from Ecton we, as a club, were entitled to be optimistic. Storm Dennis meant our February walk had to be cancelled in the interest of members' safety. While the weather was also inclement when we gathered in Cosgrave for our March Walk, 16 hardy walkers enjoyed the walk by the River Tove and the Grand Union Canal. Especially heartening for the club was seeing one of our newer members, Nick Nicholls, taking on the Walk Leaders role and it was obvious a lot of thought, time and effort went into making the walk such a success in spite of the elements.

In April our club's activities ground to a halt. Following the Governments advice on social distancing under the threat of the Coronavirus Pandemic the Shamblers' committee had no choice other than to suspend all of our upcoming events. This was an unprecedented decision but I know a decision all will agree we had to make.

Since April the committee has been regularly in contact with each other and by the end of June we decided to meet whilst maintaining social distancing. Thanks again to Jean Mole who put her home at our disposal and bakes such delicious cakes. At this meeting we decided that, with Thrapston Hall being unavailable for our AGM, we would hold it online by Zoom.

We also decided, with the relaxing of lockdown and by taking sensible social distancing and hygiene precautions, we could begin again to provide walks for our members. So on Sunday 16th August I am really looking forward to walking from the White Horse Inn, Welton. I know some members may hesitate in joining us, and this is understandable, but we will, as a club, ask people to be sensible, maintain the 2 metre rule, to take time at gates and stiles, and to sanitise hands. The pub has outdoor patios, gardens and a marquee, so plenty of space for people staying for lunch.

Looking at the club's calendar for 2020, we have had to cancel our Away Weekend to lovely Dorset, our summer picnic walk has also been cancelled. However the club has rescheduled our Away Day to Carsington Water to Sunday 20th September. At the moment we are unsure if we will organise a bus or ask members to travel independently, I welcome your views on this matter during "any other business".

We intend walking in October in Gretton from the ever popular Hatton Arms and to walk in November from Elton. Our Christmas walk is in doubt however with current social distancing rules making the bird hide out of bounds.

Between now and Christmas the club begins to fill its programme for the coming year. It has always been a busy process as we like to have our full programme on our website in time for January and this can involve lots of shuffling between walk leaders, walks, pubs etc, but somehow or other we reach the New Year with a more or less full programme.

However this year, in view of the uncertainties caused by Covid-19, we intend to try to fill our programme for the first 6 months, as well as our special events, and then fill in the remainder of the year by the end of March. It is hoped that we will go to Dorset for our rescheduled Weekend Away in Sept 2021, our Away Day can take place in June, our Picnic Summer Walk will be in Barnwell CP in July, and next year's AGM will follow a nice plate of Fish and Chips. I am confident looking to the future that we will have no shortage of volunteers from our wonderful membership.

Speaking of membership brings me to fees etc., our Treasurer will give a full account of income and expenditure, but I know under Jean's diligent supervision the clubs finances are in a healthy state and the club intends to reflect our lack of walks this year in next year's membership fees for current members. Jean will have more details shortly.

With a view to members' safety the club invested in some personalized Hi-Viz jackets, a First Aid kit and we also have whistles for sale at discount prices. Remember, it is always a good idea to have an ICE (in case of emergency) number on your mobile phone, in case of an accident while walking.

Northamptonshire Shamblers are lucky to have an excellent Website. It is full of information and we are so lucky to have Peter Riches maintaining it. The club also has a Facebook page where members are encouraged to post photos, comment and information pertaining to walking and the great outdoors. The more hits the page gets the more exposure we get online.

Now I would like to thank all our walk leaders and back markers for providing some wonderful walks for everyone to enjoy. I want to thank my fellow officers and committee members for all their hard work and sensible, cheery advice over the last year. Finally I want to thank all our members for their company while walking in our wonderful countryside, and I am really looking forward to your company again in the near future.

Thank you.  
Finbarr Finn