



Ashridge Canicrossers

Minutes of the AGM

27th March 2024

Attendance: Anne Kruse Sally Edmondson
Julie-Anne Moors Harriet Lampey
Becky Martinez Ella Knight
Claire Stibbon Matt Armstrong
Simone Fairall Julia Bragg
Emma Burrows Carin Whitfield

Apologies:

1. Welcome **Becky**

The meeting was opened at 19:30, with Becky welcoming everyone and thanking them for attending.

2. Apologies of Absence **All**

None received although several people had stated their intention to attend.

3. Minutes of Previous AGM **Becky**

The minutes of the previous AGM were agreed. Proposed by Carin. Seconded by Emma.

4. Chair's Report **Becky**

Chair's report presented by Becky, with contribution in absentia from departing Chair, George Humphreys. Chair's report appended below.

5. Treasurer's Report **Matt**

Matt provided a high-level summary of the Club accounts:

- In 2022, the club had two sources of income: Membership Subscriptions and the Ashridge Race which saw the account balance still increasing.
- However, in 2023, no race was held due to Ashridge Estate Management priorities changing. The Club also contributed towards a leaving gift for George and put on various training such as first aid and run leader training. Overall, the club has made a very small loss in the year, however membership renewals are not complete and the club still has a healthy balance.
- Karen Mclean checked and verified the accounts. The report was nominated as accurate by Anne, seconded by Julie-Anne.

- As the club funds are healthy, the Club will purchase surplus kit, some suggestions were made:
 - Reactive dog/ space needed lead sleeves
 - Replacing some worn / out of date harnesses
 - Included a few different styles of human harness, such as the ManMat racing style.

6. Re-Election and Election of Committee Members

All

As George Humphreys has retired from the club, Becky M has been acting as interim Chair and Carin W as interim Secretary. These two positions were available for nominations for permanent Chair and Secretary.

Carin W nominated Becky M for Chair, this was seconded by Simone F and, as there were no other nominations, Becky M was appointed club Chair.

As Becky M had been club secretary, this position was now open, and Claire S nominated Carin W for Secretary which was seconded by Emma B. Carin W was appointed Club Secretary and will also continue her role as web-admin.

Matthew A put himself forward for Treasurer and has been doing a brilliant job for several years now. Proposed by Carin W, seconded by Claire S.

Other nominations as to the election of committee members were:

- Harriet L proposed by Becky M and seconded by Anne K.
- Emma B, proposed by Becky M, seconded by Claire S.
- Claire S, proposed by Carin W, seconded by Emma B.

Other members were encouraged to put themselves forward for nomination if they felt they would like to help. Becky M reminded everyone that a separate Race Organisation Committee would be set up for the 2024 Race and several people seemed interested in helping with this. A call will be put out on the Facebook group for help when the time comes.

With regards to Facebook, Anne K was asked and consented to be 'group expert'. Angela Tommo has previously also been allocated this role.

7. Special Business

All

Constitution amendments:

- i) With George H leaving, signatories on the cheques for the Club need to be updated to include Becky M as Chair and Carin W as secretary with Matt A as treasurer.

- ii) Matt A will look into the option of internet banking as everyone agreed this would be the most convenient for monitoring balance and payments when memberships or race entries are paid.

Majority passed to allow bank transfers and it was agreed that BACS is much easier plus more visible.

Club Rule Amendments:

- i) The club has recently instituted a new rule that dogs must be left in cars or exercised away from the car park prior to club runs. This has resulted in a far calmer, quieter start before runs on Saturday with generally positive feedback from members.

Majority passed to approve this change in rules. Carin W will make this amendment to the club rules published on the website and Facebook files.

Club Website

- i) We have been privileged to have free hosting for our website for nearly 10 years now but, unfortunately, we must begin hosting and paying for ourselves. Carin W reported that this would cost ~£100 per year, including domain renewals. The feedback about the website was that it was useful and secure for membership forms, race entry forms, and was a useful resource for information for the club members. Majority felt we should keep the website and add it to the budget going forward. Carin W will set this up and liaise with Matt A regarding best methods to pay.

Club Fees

- i) The club fees have been £15 for many years now and this appears to be the correct level. However, if the club is to continue to put on additional training dates and events (first aid, run leader training) then the fees may need a review. Matt A will do a mid-year finance review prior to the next winter running season and the committee will take a vote on if the fees need amending and what level this should be.

8. AOB

- **Call for Run Leaders**

Becky

With our club growing, run leaders are always in short supply. Anyone interested in leading runs at their pace should make themselves known to the committee or other run leaders. Run leader mentoring and training will take place prior to anyone taking runs out.

Run leaders are also reminded there is a run leader briefing every Saturday morning prior to groups going out.

- **Kit** **Carin**
As mentioned above, the kit box needs updating and several items adding. Becky M will do a review in the summer to ensure all kit is mended or replaced where necessary and fill first aid kits where necessary.

- **Summer Events** **All**
The following summer activities were suggested:
 - Swimming – Becky to contact Box End again.
 - Walks – anyone wishing to plan a walk to just let a committee member know and an event can be placed in the Facebook page.
 - Dog first aid
 - Human first aid
 - Harness fitting workshop.
 - Summer BBQ
 - Paddle boarding
 - Volunteers welcome to help coordinate and organise these vents and activities.

- **Annual Club Race** **Harriet**
Harriet gave an update on the annual race. As the Ashridge NT has had a significant change of staff, and the NT are putting measures in place to reduce footfall and protect the estate, they are currently reticent to discuss a race with the club. Harriet has had some positive conversations with Berkhamsted Cricket Club and expects to hear back shortly. If they are happy to host our Race HQ, a new route may need to be worked out and the Race Committee will be formed to work together to plan and implement the race.

- **Ashridge National Trust Update** **Emma**
Emma B had just been to an update with the National Trust where they presented some of the measures they are implementing to reduce footfall to the estate and to protect the natural environment. While the update was aimed at horse riders, much of it is relevant to any estate user including the club. New paths are being planned which will encourage people to remain on the made paths, rather than wander into sensitive natural habitats, and random closures of paths are to be expected. The NT has reported that dog waste is a real concern for them, and the Club is reminded that there is no longer a stick-n-flick policy anywhere on the estate. With the changeover of staff at the National Trust, it is important that the Club re-introduces itself to the Trust and works together with them to ensure the estate is protected while also ensuring

permission for the club remains in place. Becky M will contact the events manager at the Trust to arrange a meeting, Carin W and Matt A will also attend if possible. It was suggested that the Club would enjoy the opportunity to work with the NT to help protect the Estate, and volunteer days / litter picking / plogging / leaflet dropping / etc could be offered to assist.

- **Run Leader Headshots**

Sally Edmondson has suggested that new starters or people changing groups may find it hard to recognise their group leader. A few photos of the run leaders on the website might help with this, since many of our Facebook profiles are pictures of our dogs, not the run leaders themselves. Carin W will look into this with the Run Leaders

Another suggestion was made that the car park be split so that certain groups always leave from a specific areas / corners. This was greeted with mixed reactions, although it was considered that more of an effort would be made to ensure that the right people were in each group which is part of the run leader briefing.

9. Close

The meeting was closed at 9.30pm

Signed and dated:

Becky Martinez **Date:**

Chairperson

Carin Whitfield **Date:**

Secretary

Matt Armstrong **Date:**

Treasurer

I was privileged to be asked to take on the role of Chair of the Club when George and Sarah made the decision to move to new pastures, down south in the New Forest. Big shoes to fill for sure, but the legacy that George has left has made the job an absolute pleasure to take on. With George and Sarah moving on late in the year I felt it only appropriate to ask George if he would like to contribute to the Chair's report and I'm pleased to say he has.

George's farewell (and Sarah) we both miss you all.

Thank you, Becky, for contacting me and asking for a bit for the Chairman's report. Little did I know at last year's AGM it would be my last. After looking for a few years we suddenly made the jump to the New Forest and to be closer to the sea - something I've missed since moving up to Marsworth / Cholesbury 35 years ago.

I must thank you as a Club for everything you gave us, and the sentiments expressed. Coming down here we realise what a special club Ashridge is, the welcoming atmosphere, the location, and the way the runs are. I always said the Club was made by the members and it is true, everyone out for a run just makes the magic happen. Running down here is just running with your dog, which is great, but there isn't that feeling you all give to the club.

For me watching from afar the way the club has continued and new persons have been welcomed to the sport. This means a lot to me, to see everyone getting out and enjoying themselves. Means we can wander along the beach, listening to and watching the waves crashing on the beach, knowing that you all have picked up the mantle and are keeping that special vibe going.

If anyone needs time out from the pressures of life and just needs a bit of forest time or beach time, you are welcome to come down, just shout. Life here is about taking things down a notch or two and just enjoying the simple things, like just walking.

I look forward to following all your adventures as a club, and a great thank you to Becky and the Committee for taking over the reins and steering the club onwards. I raise a glass of cider and toast them now (any excuse).

George & Sarah

I echo George's sentiments wholly, what makes the club, is the members, our dogs, the environment. It has been a period of change not only with George handing over the reins but with the dynamics of the club changing as we accommodate more members weekly. I love nothing more than seeing new people joining us and coming back week after week as they truly get the "canicross bug". Of course, runs would not be possible without our run leaders, who I applaud and thank, for selflessly taking on the responsibility of finding routes, and minding the

welfare of our dogs and runners whilst also ensuring that we are received well by other forest users. This year we have seen a number of new leaders step up too, and we have offered some run leader training to support both new and seasoned leaders, thank you Harriet for organising with Run the Wild, such interesting learning. James also organised some First Aid training for leaders, which was enjoyed, and I know back packs are now full of useful emergency items.

We are unique in the way that our weekly runs are organised, from zombies to supersonic we encompass all abilities and motivations and I think that is very special. Our whole club community is so supportive, and the club has been so helpful for reactive dogs, nervous dogs, super energetic dogs and their human co-pilots. This makes me honestly burst with pride, we all create such a positive environment and again I thank everyone for this. Of course, as well as the healthy aspect of getting out, it gives us a good excuse for cake post run, as well as frequenting the cafe, or Tom's wagon at the Beacon we have indulged at special occasions too, Halloween and Christmas for example!!

We are very lucky to be able to run at Ashridge and surrounding areas, with "away" days to Aspley and Woburn, although the elephants have packed their trunks and moved on, the deer in Woburn deer park have stayed present for us. Ashridge, since Covid has seen a huge increase in footfall and the NT are changing the way visitors are using the land. Members of the committee attended a meeting to assess the impact it may have on the club and although currently we are still able to run, we are mindful of what may be to come. However, on a negative note we were unable to hold our annual race due to restrictions put in place by the NT. This was a sad omission in our 10th year, but we are working hard to secure a race through 2024 at potential new venues.

So, in our 10th year, we saw over 100 signed up members, over 1000 FB members and the club going from strength to strength. With running at our core, we also embarked on other activities, particularly when the summer got too warm to run. The annual Box End swimming with our dogs again was great fun, as was a trip to the coast, walking, camping and paddleboarding. A special 10th anniversary BBQ was held in George's field, and it was so good to see both old and new members reminiscing about classic Ashridge moments, with the dog's favourite luring bike brought out despite the rain!! It is also great to see so many members in their Ashridge kit (and spotty) colours out and about at different races from 5km's to ultra's. Huge personal achievements across the board, no matter the speed or distance.

So of course we miss George, Sarah, Wilma, Smurf and new kid on the block Radish, and the memory book we pulled together demonstrated the impact they have had on the club over the years. I am very proud and want to say a massive thank you to the committee, Carin, Matt, Claire, Harriet and Emma as they have worked so hard behind the scenes to keep that special vibe and supported me to ensure we keep Ashridge as the very special club that it is.

Thank you to all within the club and here's to lots more happy running through 2024.

Becky