

Ramblers' Association of Malta

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<http://www.ramblersmalta.jointcomms.com/>

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NEWSLETTER # 9

Introduction:

On behalf of the Executive of the Association I bid you all a very Happy New Year with Wishes for the best of everything to come your way during 2008. Here's hoping that the New Year will be better than 2007 in all respects but especially in the realm that we all enjoy – the Maltese Countryside, which RAM has vouched to open up and protect against various and vile pressures.

2008 again promises to be a very eventful year with the AGM that will ring in a new executive to run the show and a challenging Walks Programme to carry out. What with the prospects of a tour to Sicily in April/May? And with making new friends as more foreign rambling groups seek RAM walks?

Membership fees are up for renewal. There is an incentive that is principally aimed to lessen the workload on the volunteers who make up our secretariat. You understand that time is of essence and voluntary work comes scarce. So to cut down on the administrative work mainly but also on the costs of stationery/postage the annual membership fee in Euros has been raised to €5-00, but only if paid on a yearly basis. But the sum of €20-00 will pay for five years and not for four years, (equivalent to €4-00 per annum). So paying €20-00 every five years will mean a saving for members and a greater saving for the Association, as loads of administrative work and costs of stationery/postage are cut down.

This incentive is experimental and may be withdrawn without prior notice. Of course should the incentive be withdrawn or the fee raised by the incoming committee, those who choose to avail themselves of the opportunity will have their subscription paid for the five years. Whichever way you decide to pay, please do it now. But the benefit of paying €20-00 is evident for both the members and the Association.

Annual General Meeting.

The Annual General Meeting for 2008 will be held on **Saturday 2nd February** at the premises of Din L-Art Helwa , 133 Melita Street, Valletta. This year marks the termination of the term of office of the first committee elected two years ago at the first ever AGM of the Ramblers Association. A new committee will be elected at the meeting and it is very important that all members attend to make their voice heard about what they consider went wrong, right or needs improving during the outgoing term. Everyone's presence and participation is essential if the Association is to meet the aspirations of its members, and all members must be aware of, and indeed understand, the actual direction that their committee has taken in various spheres. It is easy, and a very frequent occurrence, that administrations get alienated from real issues affecting the majority of members. With our Association this is the only occasion when real issues and different opinions about them can be brought to the fore and representatives elected to execute the will of the members. **SO DO NOT FAIL TO ATTEND AND MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.** It is really your chance, as a member of the Ramblers' Association of Malta, to have your say, ask questions and make suggestions. And

indeed you who feel that you can contribute, and can commit some time to participate in the administration of RAM, please do not hesitate to come forward and stand for the election. New blood is always healthy. It brings new ideas and strengthens the Association. A similar call last year landed a handful of volunteers that have contributed in no small measure toward improved Walks programmes, printing techniques and other initiatives. I take the opportunity to express RAM's appreciation to these generous volunteers.

Please take note but take no other commitment: SATURDAY 2ND FEBRUARY 2008

According to the Statute the Agenda to be followed at the AGM will be:

1. President's Address
2. Annual Administrative Report for the previous year ending 31 December
3. Annual Statement of Accounts and Auditors' Report
4. Consider and carry amendments, if any
5. Appointment of Auditors (two) for current year
6. Confirm, or Hold Election for, President and Committee, as case may be
7. Any Other Matters.

You will hear about the work and achievement of the executive during the past year in the President's address and the other brief reports. . Otherwise the necessary formalities will be kept brief to give scope for discussion. After there will be the election of the new committee this time round.

Programme of Walks January to June 2008

Attached to this Newsletter there is the new walks programme for the immediate future. It will be noted that some restricted walks held last season will be repeated for the sake of those who did not manage to enrol in time. Please do not submit your name to these walks if you have already done them before as they are intended mainly for those who applied but were refused last year.

During the Easter week there will be daily walks because another Scottish group from East Kilbride – The St Leonard's Rambling Club – have asked us to organise walks for them as we had done for the Biggar Ramblers last March. Our members will be given the opportunity to join in if they so desire, making new friends and sharing experiences.

Attire worthy of Ramblers. It is pertinent to place a comment with respect to some members who join walks. It has been observed that some participants still need to learn to be ramblers: to come for walks properly dressed and kitted. From tip to toe the Rambler must be adequately and safely dressed. This does not necessarily involve huge costs in clothes and equipment though one can spend what one wishes. More often it is the choice of proper clothes and shoes from one's existing wardrobe that needs to be done sensibly. Choice of clothing depends on the weather mainly but one must play safe by wearing light gear that is not too loose neither too tight, with an anorak or wind breaker that can be removed and hung around the hips or placed in the back-pack if the going gets too hot, as it usually does. Shoes used normally for work or daily use, or even for sport are generally not adequate. Usually such shoes have plain soles that are smooth and tend to become very slippery and therefore dangerous for rambling, especially in the countryside where surface conditions are very unpredictable. Old shoes are especially unsuitable. Good foot-wear needs to have non-slip rough soles that help grip the ground firmly whatever the surface texture and condition. Preferably such shoes will have high cover to protect the ankle from sprain. They must also be waterproof.

Hands must be free all the time. Handbags and plastic bags are out of place and no-no. Rucksacks or backpacks should take any personal belongings and nourishments/water that need to be carried on a walk, and these must be kept to bare essentials. Cameras and

umbrellas (unless these can properly serve as effective walking sticks) should never be dangled from hands. Free hands are essential to keep balance on uneven ground, to protect the body in a fall by reducing the impact, to grab at rock, growth or whatever to maintain stability. If hands are not free safety is impaired. Let us ramble as safely as possible.

Editorial

On the national level the term Development usually implies the positive element of success brought about by growth and progress. Fairly speaking success has been registered in many spheres as widely evidenced to varying degrees. Other developments are in the piping that promise more success in terms of job and career opportunities and the creation of wealth in real terms. More evident among these successes are developments in the Health, in the Financial Services sector, in the IT and Technology industries and in Tourism. What with Malta's creditable standing internationally? It will be unfair not to give credit where it is due.

However the mockery which Development, as most popularly understood in Malta, has been allowed to inflict upon the Maltese Environment, urban and rural, threatens to obscure all these successful achievements. The state of the Environment stands out like a sore thumb on a manicured hand. Building development is increasingly being seen not as an industry procuring growth and well being. Rather it is becoming associated with aesthetic destruction, uncontrollable exploitation, bad trade practice, shrewd abuse of power and lacking accountability – also definitions of what MEPA has come to represent.

It cannot be that only the relevant Ministry has not recognized such monstrous deficiencies at MEPA. Everybody that counts has pronounced himself against impropriety of all sorts and shouted wolf. It cannot be that only the person responsible has not seen that the kind of Development that MEPA is habitually sanctioning deals mortal blows to the Environment as have never been dealt before. It seems more like turning a blind eye for aiding and abetting the ongoing destruction. As the implementation of recent measures like the Rationalisation of Boundaries and the Revision to the EIA Regulations break ground the deceit of the manoeuvres is revealed as more ODZ land is dishonestly desecrated by calculated craft and cunning.

The Environment today is one area of miserable failure which no cosmetic effort is going to camouflage by way of twig-tree cover and flower bedded roundabouts. As sprigs are planted with much fanfare protected vintage is allowed to be razed in dumb silence with ease. Vast areas of arable land are ravaged as easily if for peculiar unnecessary projects, even before the sun rises. Characteristic spots and village cores make way for concrete and aluminium with easy facility.

Meanwhile easy-going sadistic habits still stick sullenly, spitefully resistant to rules and regulations, on the premise of.....tradition.

Meanwhile civil society is easily dismissed by simple default when it begs forlornly for small mercies like protection and access to national territory, sunlight, clean air and such like basic rights.

And, judging from past experience and their electoral manifestos, both main political parties seem to treat the environment as an inexhaustible resource, to be used to support the local economy, until they kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Everything comes easy in this land until the milk and honey dry up.

RAM and civil society cannot possibly take it easy any longer lest our countryside dries up completely.

The Secretary

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